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THE LIFE OF
SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT

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William Vernon Harcourt, act. 25

After a pencil drawing by G.F. Watts in the possession of Lady Harcourt

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THE LIFE OF SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT

By

A. G. GARDINER

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOLUME I
(1827–1886)

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Candid

PREFACE

IT has been said that the life of every one contains the material for at least one good book. If this is not a good book, the fault is not with the life it records, nor with the material of that life supplied to the biographer. When, at the late Lord Harcourt's request, I undertook the task I did so, not only because I felt a personal attraction to the theme, but because I believed it had an enduring human interest and an important political value. In that view I have not been mistaken. The story of any life faithfully told should be something of a revelation to the writer as well as to the reader. It is not possible to live for a long period in constant companionship with a man's public acts and most intimate private thoughts without making many discoveries and emerging from the task with views much modified by the experience. That has been so in the present case. I did not anticipate any difficult or obscure problem of character to encounter me in attempting the portraiture of Harcourt. He was writ large and very plain. He was natural and spontaneous, elemental and singularly child-like. He wore his heart on his sleeve, and it was a very big heart. It was easily moved and when it was moved the calculations of the head went by the board. What was in his mind tumbled out pell-mell—

> "He poured out all as plain
> As downright Shippen or as old Montaigne"—

and there was as little subtlety as there was secrecy in his mental processes. His thoughts lay clear as pebbles in a brook. When he was angry he exploded in violent wrath

and when he was happy—and few men have been endowed with such an abounding gift of happiness—he exhaled an atmosphere of gaiety and good humour that warmed the general air.

All this and much else—his unfailing wit, his boisterous humour, his combative temperament, his love of debate, his rare powers of speech, his friendships and his quarrels—lay on the surface of the man, plain alike to his time and to history. To know more of him might strengthen the impression, but could not change it, and on these aspects of Harcourt by which he dwells in the public memory it cannot be claimed that this book sheds much new light. But in other respects it is hoped that the reader will find, as the writer has found, that fuller knowledge leaves Harcourt a greater and more significant figure in the life of his time than popular judgment has divined. He was a great jester, and it was his comic genius that chiefly struck the general imagination. For the rest it was assumed that he loved the battle for its own sake and wore his principles a little lightly and negligently. The record of his life conveys a widely different impression of the man. There was much in his career that was open to criticism, and a pedantic consistency was never a feature of his political character; but it would not be easy to find in the records of modern statesmanship a life devoted with more passion and disinterestedness to the public service, a more ceaseless industry continued to the last day of life, or a more abiding enthusiasm for a fundamental political faith.

That faith had certain fixed and unalterable points. He loved his country with the warmth of a singularly rich and generous nature. He loved it for the fine things it had done for the enlargement of human liberty, and he would not suffer it to fall below the standards of its own high past. By instinct and by training alike, he had a profound reverence for justice, and in all his long and often tempestuous career it is not easy to point to any incident in which he allowed any inferior consideration, whether personal or public, to influence his sense of right. He believed that

England was a great country and could not afford to do mean things. No doubt he was sometimes on the wrong side, but, as was said of another, he was never on the side of wrong. The governing motive that is visible throughout his public action was the desire for a kindly world, and the chief function of statesmanship, as he conceived it, was to make that ideal attainable. In his own day he was sometimes supposed to be excessive in his fervour for peace, but in the light of the experience that has befallen the world since his death this accusation will not lie heavy upon his fame.

But the record of Harcourt's career is not only valuable for the light it throws on his own character and motives. It is no less valuable for the revelation of a high tradition of statesmanship that may profitably be studied at a time when statesmanship has become so deeply discredited. He was, perhaps before everything else, a great member of Parliament. He loved the parliamentary institution, regarded it as the most authentic expression of the English spirit, and served it with an unselfish loyalty and an unquestioning obedience to its traditions that have become an outworn creed. If Parliament has fallen into disrepute and has largely ceased to command the public confidence, the fact is in no small degree due to the loss in high places of that reverence for its dignity, its decency and its constitutional rights to which Harcourt was so conspicuous a witness.

In the preparation of this record of his life I have to make acknowledgment of my great debt to the labours of the late Viscount Harcourt. It is a source of deep regret that he did not live to see the completion of the work, the accomplishment of which was the chief interest of his later years. The pages that follow bear ample witness to his devotion to his father in life, and in a very real sense this book is a memorial of his devotion to his memory. The principal occupation of his life in the years following his retirement from office was the accumulation and arrangement of the vast mass of material bearing upon his father's

career. This he placed unreservedly at my disposal, and it is from these voluminous resources, thousands of official documents, private memoranda, contemporary criticisms and newspaper cuttings and tens of thousands of letters, that this record has been compiled. Especially valuable for the light it threw on the more intimate and obscure phases of the story was the Journal which Lord Harcourt, when private secretary to his father, kept during the years 1881–5 and 1892–5. From this I have made frequent quotation, and to it I have made still more frequent reference, the unusual relations of the two men giving it something of the authority of a personal record of events by Harcourt himself. Lord Harcourt lived to see the first volume written and gave me the benefit of his criticisms of that portion of the work. After his death his interest in the matter was committed to the keeping of his literary executors, Viscount Esher and Lord Buckmaster, to whom I am indebted for much valuable advice and suggestion. The task has also been greatly facilitated by the help of Miss Philip, the private secretary of the late Lord Harcourt.

My thanks are due to Lady Harcourt, the widow of Sir William, for many reminiscences bearing upon the social and domestic events of his life, and to the numerous correspondents of Harcourt (or their executors) for permission to quote from their letters. In this connection special reference is due to His Majesty the King who has graciously consented to the liberal use of letters from Queen Victoria and King Edward VII to Harcourt; and to Viscount Morley for allowing me the utmost latitude to draw upon his correspondence with Harcourt—much the most important correspondence of the latter's later life. Finally, I have to acknowledge with special warmth my indebtedness to the labours of Miss Margaret Bryant without whose assistance in tunnelling through the mountain of documents in which the record of Harcourt's career was buried I fear I should never have emerged into the daylight of publication.

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WILLIAM VERNON HARCOURT ÆT 25 . . . . *Frontispiece*

After a pencil drawing by G. F. Watts, in the possession of Lady Harcourt.

TO FACE PAGE

WILLIAM VERNON HARCOURT ÆT. 28 88

After a miniature by C. Couzens, now at Nuneham.

"À OUTRANCE!" 367

SIR VERNON YE CHALLENGER STRIKETH YE SHIELD OF YE CHIEF OPPONENT (WHO BLAZONS, ON A FIELD VERT, THREE BEACONS FLAMMANT TINSEL, FOR BEACONSFIELD. CREST—A FLIGHT OF ROCKETS, ASCENDANT. MOTTO—"PEACE WITH HONOUR."

After a cartoon by J. Tenniel, reproduced by kind permission of the proprietors of "Punch."

CHAPTER I

THE HARCOURTS

Archbishop Harcourt—Origin of the Harcourt Family—Lord Chancellor Harcourt—Poets and Wits of the Eighteenth Century at Nuneham—The Archbishop's Family—Lady Waldegrave—Canon Harcourt.

WILLIAM GEORGE GRANVILLE VENABLES VERNON, known throughout his long life as William Vernon Harcourt, was born on October 14, 1827. The place of his birth is uncertain. His father, the Rev. William Vernon, was at that time Rector of Wheldrake in Yorkshire and Canon of York, and the family occupied both the Rectory at Wheldrake and the Residence at York. It was at one or other of these homes that the future Chancellor of the Exchequer first saw the light, and the fact that his father was the Canon in residence at the time of his son's birth is strong evidence in favour of York. The atmosphere into which he was born was patrician and ecclesiastical. His mother, Matilda Mary, daughter of Colonel William Gooch, was a granddaughter of Sir Thomas Gooch, who was in turn Bishop of Bristol, of Norwich, and of Ely, and at the palace of Bishopthorpe his grandfather on the paternal side, Edward Venables Vernon, was in the midst of his long tenure of the archbishopric of York, which he occupied from 1807 till his death in his ninety-first year in 1847.

It is the fortune of few men to live a life so prolonged, so prosperous, and so uniformly happy as that enjoyed by this amiable man. The son of George, first Lord Vernon, Baron of Kinderton, by his third wife, sister of Simon, first

Earl Harcourt, he was born in 1757, in the midst of that period of national adventure when the genius of the first William Pitt was annihilating France by sea and land and when, as Horace Walpole humorously remarked, men used to ask on waking what new regions had been added during the night to the British dominion. At an early age the future Archbishop was sent to Westminster School, whither he journeyed from his home at Sudbury in Derbyshire, a distance of 133 miles, on horseback, followed by his mounted groom with saddlebags. From Westminster in due course he proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford, and, having graduated and toured the Continent, he entered holy orders, and became incumbent of the family living at Sudbury, Prebendary of Gloucester by the gift of the Duke of Portland, and a little later—it was the comfortable day of pluralities—a canon of Christ Church. In 1784 he married Lady Anne Leveson-Gower, third daughter of Granville, Earl Gower, first Marquess of Stafford, by Louisa, daughter of the first Duke of Bridgwater. From this marriage sprang a family of sixteen children, eleven sons and five daughters, fourteen of whom lived to maturity.

Endowed with adequate intellectual gifts, a distinguished bearing, high character, and powerful connections, Vernon's path in the Church was assured. In 1791, at the age of thirty-four, he was appointed by William Pitt to the see of Carlisle, which he retained until 1807, when the Duke of Portland, then Prime Minister, promoted him to the archbishopric of York, which he held to his death forty years later. His life was filled with grave and various activities. He toured his diocese in carriage-and-four in pursuit of his episcopal functions, played a conspicuous part in the House of Lords, and in later years, when the Harcourt estates had fallen to him, spent much of his time in Oxfordshire in performing the duties of a great landowner. He was an uncompromising Church and State man, and his general political and religious attitude is illustrated by his opposition in the House of Lords to the cause of Catholic emancipation. In the great ceremonial events and dignified duties of his day

he took a distinguished part, serving on the Queen's Council during the illness of George III, preaching the sermon at the coronation of George IV, and assisting at the coronation and the marriage of Queen Victoria. It was to him, as a member of the Queen's Council, that George III complained that he was not given cherry tart often enough. But though courtly and a courtier, he was no sycophant, and, in connection with the trial of Queen Caroline, voted against the divorce clause in the ministerial Bill of Pains and Penalties as a protest against the notorious irregularities of George IV, an offence which caused the King to turn his back on him at the next levée. In the midst of his multifarious public duties, the Archbishop found time for the exercise of that domestic affection which is a tradition of the family, and his abundant correspondence with his numerous children reveals a mind of much sweetness and sympathy.

II

It was in June 1830, when the Archbishop was seventy-three and his grandson, the subject of this memoir, was in his third year, that the family name was changed. The death of William, third Earl Harcourt, left the Archbishop, as the great-grandson of Lord Chancellor Harcourt, the inheritor of his estate, and the assumption of the family name was a condition of the succession. It was a succession to an illustrious inheritance, which had accrued to the family in the course of seven centuries. At the end of the twelfth century Robert de Harcourt married Isabel de Camville, who brought him the Oxfordshire manor of Stanton as a marriage portion. Isabel had inherited from her mother Millicent, a cousin of Queen Adeliza, second wife of Henry I, who had herself received the lordship of Stanton as a marriage gift from the Queen. Since that time Stanton Harcourt has remained in the possession of the Harcourt family without a break.

The genealogists trace the descent of the lords of Stanton Harcourt back to a certain Bernard, a Saxon who is said to have obtained in 876, at the time of Rollo's invasion, the

lordships of Harcourt, Cailleville and Beaufícel in Normandy and to have founded the French noble family of Harcourt. Bernard is sometimes described as "the Dane." His youngest son, Anchetil, took the surname of Harcourt, and Anchetil's eldest son Anguerraud de Harcourt accompanied William of Normandy in his invasion of England. Robert, the second son, built the castle of Harcourt in Normandy in 1100, and his grandson Ivo, who inherited the English estates of the Harcourts, is regarded as the founder of the English family. From the time of the acquisition of Stanton Harcourt the family historian is on firmer ground. A long succession of Harcourts, allying themselves by marriage with other landed families and from time to time acquiring fresh property, appear in the records of their times. The Sir Robert Harcourt who bore the standard of Henry VII on Bosworth Field received from the King in 1501 the stewardship of the manors and lordships of Ewelme, Tackley, Swyncombe, Lewknor, Newnham, Swerford, etc.

Some of the Harcourt estates were dissipated by the adventurous Robert Harcourt, whose relation of a Voyage to Guiana (1613) in the reign of James I figures in *Purchas his Pilgrimes*. He built and fitted out at his own expense three vessels, the *Rose* of 80 tons, the *Patience*, a pinnace of 36 tons, and a shallop of 9 tons called the *Lily*, with which he sailed to the New World in 1609. Doubtless partly on that account he sold the manors of Ellenhall, Staffs, and Wytham, Berks, which had been in the possession of the family since the reign of King John. It is related that when he found the sale of Ellenhall insufficient to meet his needs he said, "Let loose a pigeon," adding that he would sell the land over which the pigeon flew. The pigeon circled round the Wytham estate, now the property of the Earl of Abingdon. To Harcourt himself the expedition brought some fame, and apparently considerable financial loss, for his son Simon succeeded to a very impoverished estate. He sought to mend matters by serving in various campaigns as a soldier of fortune, fighting in the Low Countries under his uncle Horace, Lord Vere, when he was

sixteen, and spending another twenty years campaigning mostly in the service of the Prince of Orange. He took part in the Scottish operations of 1639–40, and in 1641 he was sent to Dublin with a regiment of 1200 foot, and was designated Governor of Dublin "much to the comfort of the Protestants and terror of the rebels," says his chronicler. He was mortally wounded next year when attacking Castle Kilgobbin, Co. Dublin.

It was his grandson, also named Simon, Solicitor-General and then Attorney-General under Queen Anne, Lord Keeper, and in the last year of the Queen's reign Lord Chancellor, who became the first Lord Harcourt and restored the family fortunes, which had been reduced to a very low ebb during the three preceding generations. His father, Sir Philip Harcourt, had refused to recognize the Commonwealth and suffered accordingly, and his stepmother, née Elizabeth Lee (ancestress of the Harcourts of Anckerwyke), who had held Stanton Harcourt for life, had allowed the place to go to ruin. Simon, when he had become prosperous, bought Nuneham Courtenay from the family of Wemyss in 1710, and resided there from time to time, but he lived principally at Cokethorpe, about 2½ miles from Stanton Harcourt, the old manor house at Nuneham being small. Like his father he stood by the Stuarts, though not without vacillations which won for him from Swift the name of "Trimming Harcourt." There is no evidence that he was definitely Jacobite as his enemies alleged. His opinions account for his making little headway under William and Mary, but his preferment was rapid under Queen Anne, who raised him to the peerage in 1711 with the title of Baron Harcourt of Stanton Harcourt. This was in the year after his defence of Sacheverell, which raised him high in the Queen's favour. "We had yesterday," writes a contemporary of Harcourt's speech, "the noblest entertainment that ever audience had from your friend Sir Simon Harcourt. He spoke with such exactness, such force, such decency, such dexterity, so neat a way of commending and reflecting as he had occasion, such strength of argument, such a winning persuasion, such

an insinuation into the passions of his auditors as I never heard. . . . His speech was universally applauded by enemies as well as friends." The silver salver which Sacheverell presented to his defender is still preserved at Nuneham.

With the advent of George I Harcourt surrendered the great seal, and spent some years in retirement, cultivating the muses and the acquaintance of the wits of his time who were the familiar associates of his son Simon, a man of unusual gifts who died before his father. Pope, Prior, Gay and Swift were frequent guests at Cokethorpe, and a portrait of Pope commissioned by Harcourt from Kneller hangs at Nuneham. That the Lord Chancellor was an agreeable companion there is evidence from Pope himself, to whom Harcourt had in 1718 lent the deserted remnant of the house at Stanton Harcourt to provide him with a quiet retreat while he was engaged on his translation of Homer. Writing to Caryll from Stanton Harcourt, Pope says :

> I was necessitated to come to continue my translation of Homer, for at my own house I have no peace from visitants. . . . Here, except this day that I spend at Oxford, I am quite in a desert incognito from my very neighbours, by the help of a noble lord who has consigned a lone house to me for this very purpose. I could not lie at his own, for the very reason I do not go to Grinstead, because I love his company too well to mind anything else when it is in my way to enjoy that.

On the death in 1727 of the Lord Chancellor who, having allied himself with Sir Robert Walpole, had been made a viscount in 1721 and re-admitted to the Privy Council in the following year, the title and estates passed to his grandson, Simon, who became first Earl Harcourt of Stanton Harcourt and Viscount Nuneham of Nuneham Courtenay in 1749. His sister, Martha, married the first Lord Vernon, and was the great-grandmother of Sir William Harcourt. It was probably with a certain sense of gratitude, as well as from sympathy of taste, that Sir William was accustomed to declare himself "an eighteenth century man," for that century was the golden age of the Harcourt story, and the treasures of Nuneham are richest in the memorials of the Court associations of that time.

The first Earl Harcourt was governor to the Prince of Wales, afterwards George III, was for a short time British ambassador in Paris, and for five years Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. There seems to be no reason for Walpole's gibe that he was " civil and sheepish " and could not teach the Prince " other arts than what he knew himself, hunting and drinking." As a matter of fact, he and his fellow-governor, the Bishop of Norwich, were so badly treated by the Dowager Princess of Wales, who thought that " books and logic were no use to princes," that they resigned. Lord Harcourt was sent to Germany in 1761 to marry by proxy and to bring to England the King's bride, Princess Charlotte Sophia of Mecklenburgh. The marriages of British royalties with scions of minor German royal houses were apparently no more popular in those than in later times, for Horace Walpole wrote that " Lord Harcourt is to be at the court of the Princess of Mecklenberg, if he can find it." Harcourt held many court appointments, and eventually (1772) became Viceroy of Ireland, not with much credit, for during his five years of office the system of corruption which he found flourishing when he arrived was not diminished. He resigned on January 25, 1777, in consequence of a disagreement with the military authorities, and retired to Nuneham. Here in 1755 he had begun building operations on the Italian villa which was to supersede the old manor house. For that purpose stone was brought by the river from Stanton Harcourt. The plans, which gave, as so often in eighteenth century architecture, splendid state rooms, but poor accommodation for sleeping and for the necessary domestic offices, proved quite inadequate. Many alterations and additions followed, the house only being completed in 1833 by Archbishop Harcourt, who built an entirely new wing, terraces, parapets, and various outbuildings.

It was at Nuneham that the Earl died under tragic circumstances in September 1777. Horace Walpole, who, as we have seen, did not love him, relates the incident characteristically in a letter to William Mason :

September 18, 1777.—An amazing piece of news that I have this

moment received from town. The dinner bell had rung—where? at Nuneham. The Earl did not appear. After much search, he was found standing on his head in a well, a dear little favourite dog on his legs, his stick and one of his gloves lying near. My letter does not say whether he had dropped the other. In short, I know no more. . . .

And in a letter of the same date to Sir Horace Mann:

It is concluded that the dog had fallen in, and that the Earl, in trying to extricate him, had lost his poise and tumbled in too. It is an odd exit for the Governor of a King, Ambassador and Viceroy.

But though Walpole did not like the deceased Earl he was deeply attached for so incurable a cynic to the new Earl, and writing to Mason again three days later he says:

September 21, 1777.—I fear I was a little indelicate about Lord Harcourt's death, but I am so much more glad, when I am glad, than I am sorry, when I am not, that I forgot the horror of the father's exit in my satisfaction at the son's succession. . . . I am sure Lord Nuneham will have been exceedingly shocked; he is all good nature, and was an excellent son, and deserves a fonder father.

Walpole's affection for the new Earl extended to the new Earl's wife. He had married his cousin, Elizabeth Vernon, a sister of the future Archbishop, a woman of unusual graces of person and mind whose memoirs of her life at Court as Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte, and whose correspondence with the royal princesses, together with the series of letters addressed to her by Mrs. Siddons, are preserved in the privately printed *Harcourt Papers*. "She writes with ease and sense, and some poetry," said Walpole of her in a letter to the Countess of Upper Ossory, "but is as afraid of the character as if it was a sin to make verses." She and her husband, as Lord and Lady Nuneham, had done much to make Nuneham a literary and artistic centre of the time, and had entertained there Walpole, Mason, Whitehead, Mrs. Clive, the actress, Mrs. Siddons and other celebrities. While the lady wrote verses, her husband etched and collected etchings. On the latter subject there is preserved a correspondence with J. J. Rousseau, with whom he had become acquainted in Paris and whose portrait, given to him by Rousseau himself, is at Nuneham together

with Rousseau's pocket book, his pocket Tasso and other personal gifts. "You have gone beyond what I have ever seen in etching," wrote Walpole to Lord Nuneham in 1763. "I must beg for the white paper edition too, as I shall frame the brown, and bind the rest of your lordship's works together." But the friendship of Walpole cooled when the new Earl and Countess modified the position they had hitherto taken up with regard to royalty and became members of the innermost court circle. Whatever the cause of the reconciliation between the Court and the Harcourts there was no doubt about its warmth when it had been accomplished. The King pressed the Spanish Embassy upon Lord Harcourt, and Lady Harcourt became Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Charlotte. Later the Earl was made Master of the Horse, and while the intimacy with the Court continued the King and Queen, with the Princesses, paid frequent visits to Nuneham.

In 1806 the Earl, confronted with the necessity of paying £62,000 out of his estate as fortune for his brother and sister, sold Pipewell Abbey. On his death, three years later, he was, being childless, succeeded by his brother, General William Harcourt (1743–1830). He also being childless, his wife urged the disposal of the property to the French Harcourts, many of whom had been refugees in England after the French Revolution, and the meeting with whom is recorded in the *Harcourt Papers* (vol. xi). The third Earl is best remembered by an incident in the American War of Independence. He was then serving in the British Army, and performed the remarkable feat of capturing an American General, Charles Lee, in his own quarters—"almost in sight of his army" to use Harcourt's words to his father—in the course of a scouting expedition.

General and Mrs. Harcourt spent the years 1792 to 1795 on the Continent, the General serving under the Duke of York in the disastrous campaign in Flanders in 1793–4 and succeeding to the Command when the Duke returned to England. On the accession of George IV the General, now Earl Harcourt, was made a field marshal, and he and

his wife were as intimate with the royal family as their predecessors had been with the family of George III, Lady Harcourt having, among other duties, a commission to attend the unfortunate Princess Caroline of Brunswick on her wedding journey to England.

With the death of the third Earl in 1830, the title became extinct, and the estates reverted as we have seen to Archbishop Vernon, as the descendant of Martha Harcourt, wife of Lord Vernon and daughter of Lord Chancellor Harcourt. Like the Harcourts, the Vernons were Norman in origin. They derived from a William de Vernon, who was lord of the town of Vernon in Normandy in 1052, and was the father of two sons who came over with the Conqueror.

It was a time-honoured jest of Sir William Harcourt's political opponents to twit him on his Plantagenet descent. The point of the jest was a little obscure, for a Plantagenet descent was a character he shared with many of the contemporary aristocracy and with many more who were outside the pale of the aristocracy. The royal element in his ancestry came from his grandmother, the wife of the Archbishop. Lady Anne was, through her mother, Lady Louisa Egerton, heiress to the Bridgwater estates, which were entailed on her heirs male. Through the Bridgwaters and the Derbys her descent is traced back to Lady Margaret Clifford, who in 1555 married the fourth Earl of Derby. This lady was a great-granddaughter of Henry VII, her grandmother being Henry's daughter, Princess Mary of England and Queen Dowager of France, who married, as her second husband, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. Through their mother the Archbishop's children were furnished with an enormous family connection with the Sutherlands, the Carlisles, the Macdonalds and others. Canon Harcourt, the father of Sir William, mentions, in one of his letters, "the 78 cousins Louisa and I counted up the other day."

To this prolific circle few can have contributed more handsomely than the Archbishop and Lady Anne. Even in days when large families were the rule rather than the

exception their abundant children were the subject of respectful and good-humoured comment. When Edward Vernon was appointed to the bishopric of Carlisle by Pitt, Dr. Hinchcliffe, Bishop of Peterborough, wrote to congratulate him on not being deprived of his other preferments, the living of Sudbury and the canonry of Christ Church. "The habits of life which a Bishop must adopt," he said, "besides that you are in of getting a child annually, cannot be maintained under two or three and twenty hundred pounds a year, and if you preserve your form ten or a dozen years longer, half your bishopric will go in breeches and shoes."

That the problem of "breeches and shoes" mixed itself up with graver pre-occupations is shown by a letter which the Archbishop wrote in 1823 to Charles Vernon, his ninth son, then Rector of Rothbury, and afterwards Canon of Carlisle. Charles had many fine qualities, but a genius for finance was not one of them, and in the following gentle rebuke there is evidence that the £100 bank bill enclosed was not by any means the first incident of the kind :

Archbishop Vernon to his son Charles.

York, *July* 31, 1823.—My dear Charles.—I send you a Bank Post Bill for one hundred pounds, which the Bankers, either at Newcastle or Alnwick, will exchange for you into smaller Bank or County notes. I am well aware that you have not the great principles of character requisite for forming a good Economist, I mean activity and method, but I earnestly exhort you to endeavour to acquire them for your own comfort and credit's sake. You are mistaken in supposing that everything was so much cheaper when I became Rector of Sudbury than when you succeeded to Rothbury. In 1782, when I commenced my Sudbury Residence, meat of all kinds, and corn, were *dearer* than in 1822. The articles supplied by the Oilman, the Tallow Chandler, and the Grocer, were as *dear* ; in fact, I could not afford to buy either the superfine Green or Bohea Teas. In Coffee I did not indulge *myself*, but had about six pounds annually for my more *particular Company*, at an expense of about thirty shillings ; but, then, recollect that, out of *my* £500 *per annum*, I had to pay for every individual article of my furniture (for I found only bare walls), for my Linen, Plate, China, and Wine. Of course I could not do this in *one year*, but I did it by instalments, out of the receipts of three years.

By strict and methodical economy I have successfully struggled with very many pecuniary difficulties. In the first place I began by denying myself whatever I did *not really want*, and I made a point of entering regularly, in an account book, whatever I expended, and of settling *monthly* all my minor bills for meat, flour, common country groceries, etc.; and ever since I was delivered from the weight of my *first setting out* in furnishing, etc., etc., I have invariably settled my annual bills on the 1st of January, or as soon after as I could get them in. This has placed me in the situation of independence, and of being able to provide for the necessities *of my numerous family*, and will, I trust, under the blessing of God, enable me to contribute further to their comfort at my death. You have now my secret on this most important subject; whether you will profit by it remains to be seen. . . . Ever very affectionately yours, F. EBOR.

The Archbishop's eldest son, George Granville Harcourt, who became master of Nuneham on his father's death in 1847, married, as his second wife, the famous and brilliant Lady Waldegrave. She was a daughter of John Braham, the great tenor singer, and at the time of this her third marriage was twenty-six years of age. Harcourt was then a widower of sixty-two, and was Peelite M.P. for Oxfordshire. Lady Waldegrave, who from her second husband inherited Strawberry Hill and other estates, lived much at Nuneham, which under her sway was the scene of great social and political activity. Lady Harcourt, Sir William's widow, recounts a tradition that the Archbishop, who had been greatly dominated and led into great expense by the charms of Lady Elizabeth Harcourt, was less pleased at the thought of George Harcourt's second marriage and when showing the beauties of the place to friends would say: "To think that all this will go to a Jewess!" The "Jewess," however, with her strong character, spirits, audacity, power over men, generous instincts and real kindness was destined to play a rôle in the social life at Nuneham more conspicuous even than that of her predecessor. "She said to me once," writes Lady Harcourt, "'I never cared for Nuneham unless it was full of people,' and judging from the traditions in the house of the rooms in which guests were asked and expected to sleep, very full, not to say uncomfortable, it must often have been. Mr. Charles

Villiers told me once that at this time of Lady Waldegrave's third marriage a Frenchwoman, who was her companion, advised her to marry Mr. Harcourt as she had enquired and found out that as eldest son he *would inherit the Archbishopric.*"

Some years before George Harcourt died she opened and restored the house at Strawberry Hill, and after his death in 1861, when his brother, Canon William Harcourt, succeeded to the Harcourt estates, it became her principal residence. Two years later she married as her fourth husband Mr. Chichester Fortescue (afterwards Lord Carlingford), and henceforward Strawberry Hill and 7, Carlton Gardens, became active centres of the Liberal Party, where the duc d'Aumale, Bishop Wilberforce, Lords Grey and Clarendon were among the older habitués and William Harcourt, her nephew through her third marriage, the most conspicuous of the younger men, who included Julian Fane and Lords Dufferin, Ampthill and Alcester. There is an interesting glimpse of this brilliant woman in Sir W. Gregory's *Reminiscences* when, referring to Gladstone's Irish Church Bill in 1869, he says :

I had almost made up my mind to move an amendment to the Bill, but I was dissuaded by Lady Waldegrave, with whom for the last few years I had contracted a strong friendship, and whose advice much influenced me in every action of my life. She was a most remarkable woman, one of the most remarkable I have ever known. She was very pretty as a girl, and married first Mr. Waldegrave, and then his brother Lord Waldegrave, who was one of the most debauched, drunken rowdies of his time. A year of her married life she passed with him in Newgate. . . . He shortly afterwards died of dissipation, leaving her a title and fine income—in fact, everything he had—and she married, thirdly, a very different man, Mr. Harcourt, who was all that was respectable. She was an excellent wife to him, and neither during her married life with him, nor previously, in spite of the bad company into which she was thrown and the temptations to which she was exposed, was there ever a whisper of disparagement on her character. No great lady held her head higher, or more vigorously ruled her society. Her house was always gay, and her parties at Nuneham were the liveliest of her time, but she never suffered the slightest indecorum, nor tolerated improprieties.

It was on the death of Lady Waldegrave's third husband and her consequent removal from Nuneham that Canon William Harcourt (1789–1871), the Archbishop's fourth son and father of Sir William Harcourt, succeeded to the family estates. He had been born while his father was still rector of Sudbury, and he entered the Navy as a midshipman, not with any predilection for the career, but because two of his elder brothers desired to take orders and presumably his father's finances did not permit at the moment of a long professional preparation for a third. He was the most precocious and remarkable of the Archbishop's children, and at the age of nine was criticizing quantities in his brother's Latin verses and turning these verses into excellent English. At twelve, when he set out for the sea, he visited the House of Commons, remaining from four o'clock in the afternoon until three in the morning, and he wrote to his father expressing the greatest satisfaction at having heard Mr. Fox, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Wyndham and his delight at "the amazing elegance and happiness" of Wyndham's speech. On board H.M. *Theseus* at Spithead, the little middy, writing to his parents, says he "falls every now and then into fits of melancholy, which owe their origin to my thinking too much of what I have left and comparing it, too, too narrowly with my present situation." There was no long preparation for the young seaman in those rude days, and he sailed forthwith in his ship to the West Indies, where he served five years.

But, on his brother Edward's death, his father, now Bishop of Carlisle, wrote to his captain suggesting that unless William had acquired an affection for the Navy he might return home to go into the Church. The youth accordingly left the Navy, and went to Christ Church, Oxford. Having graduated, he was ordained in 1814, and became chaplain to his father (now Archbishop) and vicar of Bishopthorpe, subsequently becoming rector of Wheldrake, a village 6 miles from York, a canon residentiary of York and finally rector of Bolton Percy, where he remained until his succession to the Nuneham estates on the death of his

brother in 1861. Mrs. Harcourt, who was, her daughter-in-law relates, "full of executive ability and kindness," directed the management of house, garden and estate. "The task," she writes, "must have been somewhat simplified by the fact that the estate then yielded a sufficient income for its maintenance. As the house was often filled to overflowing she suggested to my husband, then alone in the world with one delicate little boy, that they should live when he liked at the house in the Park now occupied by the Agent."

It is, however, as a scientist rather than as a clergyman that the Canon is remembered. At Oxford his friendship with Dr. John Kidd led him to take up science, especially chemistry, and his passion for this subject remained to the end the dominant interest of his life. He found time in his quiet parish to pursue a series of experiments on the advice of Dr. Wollaston and Sir Humphry Davy, founded the Science Museum in York, became the first president of the Yorkshire Philosophical Society and in 1824, the year of his marriage, was elected a fellow of the Royal Society. It is as the chief inspirer and founder of the British Association that his memory in the world of science is most secure. He organized the first meeting of the Association held at York in September 1831, framed, with the assistance of Sir David Brewster, Sir Roderick Murchison and Professor Phillips, the plan of its proceedings and the laws governing the new institution, was appointed its general secretary, and in 1839 filled the office of president. The subject of his address was the history of the composition of water. He supported the claims of Cavendish to the discovery by original documents, and resolutely sustained the title of science to entire freedom of inquiry. Another subject to which Canon Harcourt devoted himself was the effect of heat on inorganic compounds, but his chief study for forty years was directed to the conditions of transparency in glass, his main purpose being to acquire glasses of definite and mutually compensative dispersions so as to make perfectly achromatic combinations. During the last years of this

work he was assisted by Professor (afterwards Sir Gabriel) Stokes. Among his other public services he was responsible for the foundation of the Yorkshire School for the Blind and the Castle Howard Reformatory. His extensive correspondence, printed in the *Harcourt Papers* (volumes xiii and xiv), was chiefly carried on with his scientific friends, but his character, tastes and outlook upon life may be indicated by passages from typical letters addressed to his son William when the latter was at Cambridge:

February 26, 1849.— . . . If I were you I would enter life as a wooer of the *comic* rather than the *tragic* muse; it is not every man that is born, like that prodigy the younger Pitt, as "*Jupiter tonans*" or rather as the *Minerva* who sprung in full armour out of his head. Do not let the undoubting confidence, which *you* have *to excess* in your own *first convictions* on the most complicated subjects, lead you to confound your own ardour and power of language with *his most precocious talent* for the *acquisition of accurate knowledge*, his intuitive poetical sagacity, and power of grasping beforehand that which ordinary men gain by long processes of corrective experience. . . . As for you, my dear Willy, you *write*, I believe, more discreetly and temperately than you sometimes *converse*, but *have a care*; *keep quiet*, learn as accurately as you can the *statistics of the world and of England*; study *its constitution and law with that of nations*; in party politics tread *lightly* and *warily*, keeping a conscience for every *real point of conscience*.

December 12, 1849.— . . . Your view of these matters, to judge from your letter, seems to be that *impulse* should determine the *fact*; mine is that *the fact* should decide *the impulse*. I enquire first—Did Herod murder the children of Bethlehem? A venerable writer, in whom I have reason to place confidence, affirms that he did. There is no affirmation to the contrary. The fact agrees with the jealousy and the cruelty of his conduct as recorded by other writers. This fact however is unnoticed by Josephus; but then Josephus passes by many other facts, and in particular all that relate to the history of Christ. If I still doubt the fact, I do not denounce it; if I think it true, I know the horror which it inspires in those who are of my opinion, and I do not think I should add to it by calling Herod a brute and a villain, still less by declaring that had I been a Jew, I would have put him to death with my own hand. That your impulses are good I rejoice; that they lead you into blameable excesses of expression, I know; but I trust in God that they will never lead you into violent *acts* of fanaticism. Learn, my dear boy, to be in nothing, least of all in *religion*, the mere creature of imagination and impulse. You have not travelled over

my library if you have not observed in it the works of Spinoza and Bayle and Toland, and Woolston, and Middleton, and Socinus, and if you had ever travelled over my mind, you would know that the reasonings of deists, pantheists, and atheists from Epicuræus down to Blanco White, are not only as familiar to me, but have been weighed by me, as far as they were not transparent fallacies, with as much care and scruple as any on the other side. A sound and calm understanding will always profit by looking at its subject *on all sides*. I should have no fear of any one not remaining essentially and practically a Christian, who deliberated before he determined, taking *reason* for the *natural* "candle of the Lord within," and "probability as *the guide of life*"—any one I say of *sound and calm understanding*—Your *man of impulse* fits his religion, whatever he calls it, to his passions, and too often, like a Fitzgerald or a Robespierre, beginning with thoughts of freedom and humanity, ends in deeds of crime and blood. For *you* I am sure the best prayer I can offer is, that you may learn to *distrust yourself*, and to *discipline your mind by subjecting impulse to reason*, and submitting to the *trammels of common sense*.

(*Undated.*) We have been much inspirited by your success, which has been rather beyond my expectations, and is the more agreeable to me from the opinion I hold of the accurate sciences as a kind of pruning hook for paring off redundancies and reducing the mind to a fit state for bearing real fruit. In the schools of mathematical and physical philosophy we gain a keener eye for truth, a clearer notion of proof, a greater value for reason and a lower estimate of opinion. Now you are going on to strive with the Athletes in a less severe but more various game which includes all the decorations of the mind, the methods of persuasion, the accumulated experience of ages, and in that rivalry I hope for still greater distinction for you that you may become hereafter, if your life be spared, an useful citizen of this little world of ours on your road to greater things, God willing, in a world to come. . . .

The last ten years of the Canon's life were spent at Nuneham in the now uninterrupted pursuit of his scientific interests. He died in 1871, and was succeeded by his elder son Edward W. Harcourt, the historian of the family, who collated the *Harcourt Papers* in fourteen volumes. Unlike his more famous brother, Edward Harcourt continued the Tory traditions of the family, and though he remained on affectionate terms with William, he deplored his politics and was aggrieved when he became the Liberal candidate for Oxford, while he himself was the Conservative candidate

for Oxfordshire. There is a story that on one occasion at the Carlton Club, Sir Thomas Gladstone, the elder brother of the Prime Minister, turned to Edward Harcourt and sadly remarked : " Mr. Harcourt, you and I have two very troublesome brothers."

On Edward Harcourt's death in 1891 the Nuneham estates which were disentailed by him passed to his only son, Aubrey, who spent much of his life in travel. He remained unmarried, and on his death in 1904 left Nuneham to his uncle, the subject of this memoir.

CHAPTER II

BOYHOOD AND SCHOOLDAYS
1835—1846

Canon Harcourt's family—Schooldays at Southwell—Death of Louisa Harcourt—Much work and little play at Durnford—Mr. Parr removes with his pupils to Preston—Preparation for the University.

ALTHOUGH the family at the Canon's residence at York did not rival the heroic dimensions of that of the Archbishop at the Palace it was sufficient to make what Bishop Hinchcliffe called the problem of "breeches and shoes" an important one. William was the second son in a family of seven children, two sons and five daughters. The eldest son, Edward William, succeeded his father in the Nuneham estates in 1871. Of the daughters, the eldest, Louisa, died in childhood; Emily Julia remained unmarried, outliving by nine years her brother William, who to the end of his life carried on an abundant and affectionate, correspondence with her; Cecilia Caroline married Admiral Sir E. Bridges Rice; Selina Anne became the wife of Sir W. C. Morshead and Mary Annabella the wife of George de la Poer Beresford, M.P., eldest son of the Archbishop of Armagh.

William was in his third year when the death of the third and last Earl Harcourt brought his branch of the family into the Nuneham succession, and changed his name from William Vernon to William Harcourt. Thenceforward his grandfather divided his time between his archiepiscopal duties at York and the administration of his estates at Nuneham, the fabric of which he restored and enlarged and where he was accustomed to entertain his guests, among his visitors in later years being Queen Victoria

and the Prince Consort.[1] His wife, Lady Anne, did not long survive the succession to the new dignities and responsibilities. She died in 1832, after a married life of forty-eight years, and the bereaved Archbishop spent the days of his mourning with this son and his grandchildren at the rectory at Wheldrake.

In spite of the abundance of children it was not a gay household, for it was conducted on austere principles. Recalling Harcourt's childhood, his sister Emily long years afterwards said :

Our earliest life was made for all of us very monotonous, and no variety or amusements of any kind provided for us, partly from my father's temperament, who saw no necessity for either in his own case or in that of any of us, and from my mother's nervousness after the death of my sister Louisa, thinking the dull routine of the schoolroom the safest thing for us. We never had a holiday.

We had a very ignorant Swiss governess for twelve years, who came when W. V. H. was four years old. He was quite right in disliking her at first sight and got up into a tree with a stick to defend himself against her, for which my father punished him. I believe there was war ever after between her and the two brothers, as there was a dark cupboard at the Vicarage at Bishopthorpe in which they were shut up and in which they pierced holes with a gimlet to get air and light, much to the astonishment of their persecutor. I suppose this reign to have lasted, so far as they were concerned, for two years, as at six years old he (W. V. H.) began to ride the 3 miles into York with his brother to be day scholars at St. Peter's School. It belonged to the Cathedral and was at its East End, close to the Old Residence. The New Residence was built by my father and there W. always said he was born, but I thought it was at Bishopthorpe.[2]

[1] In a letter to her uncle, the King of the Belgians, dated from Nuneham, June 15, 1841, Queen Victoria said : " I followed Albert here, faithful to my word, and he is gone to Oxford for the whole day, to my great grief. And here I am all alone in a strange house, with not even Lehzen as a companion, in Albert's absence, but I thought she and also Lord Gardner and some gentlemen should remain with little Victoria for the first time. But it is rather a trial to me."

[2] In a letter to Lord Rosebery (October 18, 1892) announcing his return from Malwood to 11, Downing Street, Harcourt says : " I shall feel a good deal like the ' transient and embarrassed phantom ' (Lord Goderich), who produced this week sixty-five years ago the present Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lord Ripon) in the same edifice just at the same time when I was opening my own eyes in the Cathedral Close of York."

There were no holidays for the children and no games. William's amusements as a child took the practical form of helping his father with his farm accounts, and his mother with her bees, for which he provided her with a glass inspection hive. As to his behaviour, Emily described it as kind to all and always contented. Of his opinions as a child she remembered nothing, remarking significantly that whatever they were "they were not expressed before my father." But his virtues were qualified by occasional escapades such as painting the new cow green, escapades "generally planned by Eddie, though Willie only had the courage to carry them out." On one occasion the two boys planned to run away from Bishopthorpe as their mother had gone to Scarborough and they were left with their father, who was strict about their lessons. Getting a basket of food they mounted on their two ponies, inducing one of the Archbishop's grooms to go with them, but he made them return after they had crossed the York race-course.

When William was eight years of age he was sent to a private school at Southwell, near Nottingham, the headmaster of which was named Fletcher. The choice of the school was no doubt dictated by the fact that his uncle, Charles Harcourt, was Canon of Southwell at the time. Among his contemporaries at the school was Sir Tatton Sykes. His letters to his father, whom he addressed as "Dearest Pad," show a commendable enthusiasm for his studies, a healthy sense of fun and a talkative habit. "I have been top of my class for four days," he says in April 1837, "but on the fifth he took it away because I was talking. I am second now. . . ." The love of a classical quotation which remained with him through life is early revealed. "I was glad," he says, "to hear that Lou was able to go under the beech trees in her green drawing-room like Tityrus. *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi.* . . . Do you think that going out makes Lou stronger?" In a letter, written when he was eleven and signed "Your affectionate and improving son," we find him wrestling with Milton and oppressed with the sense of the unequal conflict.

" I think, as you say, that Milton is rather too learned for me, for some of the passages I have to read over and over again before I understand them, so that I do not get on very quick with it, and I am afraid it will be a long time before I know enough of Greek, Latin and Italian to write such verses as Milton's." He is more cheerful at the prospective visit of a conjuror and the tricks to be expected, and when the magician has been describes the event with fervour, adding " though I am afraid you will not enjoy my account of the conjuring as much as if dear Lou had been well."

These and many other references to " dear Lou " relate to his eldest sister, Louisa, who was dying of a spinal disease, and had been taken by her parents to St. Clare, Isle of Wight, which belonged to his uncle, Francis Harcourt. Thither from Southwell William journeyed by stage coach to spend the summer of 1837 with the family, and one of his most vivid early recollections was that of the guard of the coach putting his head in at the window and announcing that the King (William IV) was dead. His only reminiscence of his stay at St. Clare was that of dressing up in armour to receive his uncle Francis on his return. From St. Clare the family moved with their daughter to Bromley, Kent, to be near their trusted physician, Dr. Scott, and it was here that Louisa died on January 24, 1839.

II

In the meantime Canon Harcourt had been preferred to the living of Bolton Percy, and William's days at Southwell had come to an end. His father was adverse to the public school system and William and his elder brother, Edward, were sent to Durnford near Salisbury, where with five other boys, the most distinguished of whom in after life was Laurence Oliphant, they were the pupils of Canon Parr. He rejoiced in the change. They were, he wrote, among " a much nicer set of boys than at Southwell and consequently much happier, and as we have pleasant companions and plenty of liberty we do not much regret our decreased

quantity of play." He goes on to explain his gratitude to his parents for "sending us to this school at your own material inconvenience." The modern boy would not understand this gratitude, for life at Canon Parr's consisted of much work and little play. William describes the school day in a letter to his mother:

DURNFORD, *February*, 1839.—As we get up at half-past six and go into school at seven till nine, when we breakfast, then go into school till eleven, go out till twelve, come into school till two, have dinner, play till half-past three, go into school and do lessons all the rest of the day till half-past eight, then go to bed, so that we have only two hours play in the day, and as it has been very rainy these two days I have not been out for more than half an hour. I fully intended to have written yesterday to you, but as I heard the post did not go till two I thought we should have some more play than one hour before that time. . . . My principal friend here is Owen Parr, Mr. Parr's eldest son.

To this eleven-hour working day was added a Sunday task of two chapters of the Greek Testament. The classics, as might be expected, occupied the chief place in this strenuous study. William describes to his father the text-books he is using, and mentions that he is in the middle of the first book of the *Iliad* and is reading concurrently Livy and the *Hecuba* of Euripides. There are few glimpses of Canon Parr, but his political predilections are revealed when the boys write home triumphantly announcing that when the Ministers are turned out the school is to have a whole holiday. "We are going to have bonfires and burn them all in effigy." Alas, the Government returned, and the Master visited his disappointment on the boys by revoking the holiday. But the severe regimen of the school had its alleviations. There is a long description to his mother of "a fox hunt" in which one of the boys is pursued by his fellows, and another of a garden which Miss Parr has given him for his own and the peculiar joy of which is a "dear little Scotch rose tree." He begins his career as a publicist in the modest pages of the "Durnford School Magazine." And he has his social duties, indicated in a letter to his mother asking her to send him a sovereign of his which she has in her care. He has

broken his fishing line, and " as I put one of the poor little children in this village to school I have not enough remaining to pay with." The chief event of his stay at Durnford was a holiday expedition to Longford Castle which he describes in a long descriptive letter to his mother preserved among his papers. Meantime the school had grown in numbers to twenty-four, not with wholly pleasant results, for some of the new boys were mischievous, and we find William lamenting in August that liberty is restricted, no one is allowed beyond the gates, fishing is at an end and there is " no half holiday on Wednesday."

The days at Durnford were brief, for in 1840 Mr. Parr was appointed Vicar of Preston in Lancashire, and thither he took his pupils, among them the two Harcourts. " We do not call it a school at Preston as Mr. Parr says we are to consider ourselves as on a visit," writes William to his mother. But the euphemism implied no relaxation of the curriculum. The young visitors at Preston had to work no less industriously than the young scholars at Durnford had done. " We dine at four instead of two, and have luncheon at half-past twelve, at which time we go out, and then come in at two and read till dinner and then go in till half-past seven, which is tea time and then have the rest of the evening to ourselves, so that if we do not go out at twelve we can not go out at all." The classics still occupy most of the time, and Mrs. Harcourt is requested to " tell Papa we have plenty of learning by heart. We learn sixteen lines of Virgil every morning and then say forty lines of repetition on Saturday." He is concerned about the novel theories of a new drawing master. " I think his trees *niggly* as you would say, and he teaches an odd doctrine about trees, which is ' draw the shadow first and then the outline,' and altogether I do not like him." His recreations are infrequent and chiefly intellectual. We hear of an occasional walk with Mr. Venn and some schoolfellow by the Ribble, in the course of one of which Mr. Venn's anecdotes about Oxford were interrupted by a cow which charged the group and gave the master a severe blow. But games play little or no part in the record. They had an

insignificant part in the scheme of school life, and Harcourt had little taste for them, as may be gathered from a remark in one of his letters to his mother. "The order of the day was cricket in which I joined for a short time, but finding it cold I took a perambulation all over the park." The indifference was perhaps more physical than temperamental, for strange as it will seem to those who were familiar with his heroic figure in later years, he was a slim and delicate boy. "Give my best love to dear Papa from his cartilaginous youth," he says in one of his letters. "William is not allowed to play cricket as the doctor thinks that much exertion is not good for him," writes Edward to his father. "However I do not think he regrets it much, as he was never very much devoted to it. He is very great friends with his doctor, whom he has found to be an amateur chemist, and who has been supplying him with seals, impressions from the rings of Egyptian mummies in electro-type." With this indifference to sport there was at this time a concern about spiritual things unusual enough in a lively boy of thirteen. There is a memorandum in his handwriting, dated October 16, 1840, which runs as follows:

I have now just entered on my thirteenth year, and have up to this time, I must to my sorrow confess, lived in neglect of Thee, but now by the assistance of Thy Holy Spirit do resolve to follow Thee, the only God, and to renounce the service of the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and the more to strengthen me in this resolution I have determined to draw up a solemn dedication of myself to Thee which I mean on the return of each Sabbath day to read and ratify by Thy Grace. Signed, W. G. V. HARCOURT.

The Covenant follows, and the document is ratified with the sign W. V. H. and a line of inscription on the following dates:

Preston	October	18, 1840	Preston	December	6, 1840
,,	,,	25, 1840	,,	,,	20, 1840
,,	November	1, 1840	York	,,	27, 1840
,,	,,	8, 1840	,,	January	3, 1841
,,	,,	15, 1840	,,	,,	17, 1841
,,	,,	22, 1840			
,,	,,	29, 1840			

This course of self-examination seems to have continued

through half a term and the subsequent holidays. There is also a form of confession of sin, and versicles from the Communion Service, the latter suggesting that this phase was probably associated with his preparation for confirmation.

But it is the intellectual interests of life which furnish the material of the abundant correspondence with his parents. There is a portentous gravity in his boyish criticisms which must have raised a smile on the Canon's face ; but there is also an unusual maturity and grasp. Here is a characteristic note to his mother about his reading :

Harcourt to his Mother.

PRESTON (*Undated*).— . . . According to Papa's advice I began to read Horner's Life and found it so interesting that I devoured half the volume before it passed from my hands ; there are passages in the journalic account of his youthful vagaries which excite a smile in the reader as they did the indignation of the author in his maturer years ; there is something not English in the preference of metaphysical inquiries to more useful studies, this I remember was the case with Burke (who was an Irishman) in his younger days, but who after a certain course of English naturalization was among the first to laugh at his metaphysical *Inquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* ; Davy also as a boy delighted to dabble in it, a strange taste for one versed in experimental philosophy to prefer a study in which everything must be conjectured and where no certainty can be obtained, where the subtle arguer takes the place of the accurate observer. One of Horner's youthful projects was a work to parallel in the eighteenth century Lord Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* in the sixteenth, to which is subjoined an amusing note of his own some twenty years after the draft of the scheme was made. It is difficult sometimes, from the tale being told in his own words, to separate one's ideas of his immense industry from the self-reproaches of idleness which he heaps on himself in his journal, and it requires a little pause to gain a just conception of his close application and unwearied perseverance. I have a great deal more to say about Mr. Horner, but I am quite astonished at the quantity of nonsense which I have already daubed into this note with a pen which is split up to the top and which therefore I have no doubt you will not be able to read.

In excusing himself for negligence in writing to his mother, he describes himself as being kept " on a continual stretch " at Latin and Greek. " We begin at nine and work till two,

when we dine, we then work again till five, which ends our regular lessons. From five we go out till seven, when we have tea, and then we have from half-past seven till ten to ourselves, every minute of which has for this last fortnight been so fully engaged with writing notes on what we have done in the day, composing verses, finishing exercises and reading history for examination that I have not had a minute to spare for anything." There is a record of an occasional walk by the river or to the falls of the Darwen, and one long and joyous account of an expedition to Bolton Abbey, but the main theme throughout is his work—the classics he is reading, his progress in mathematics, the text-books he uses and the merits of the writers of them. There is only one reference to politics, but it is enough to show that at this stage of his career there was no suspicion of a breach with the traditional Toryism of the family. There had been a dissolution of Parliament in June 1841, and at the subsequent election Sir P. H. Fleetwood and Sir George Strickland, the Liberal candidates, were returned, whereupon Harcourt writes to his parents that " Preston, to its eternal disgrace, has returned two Radicals to Parliament."

But generally the events of the time seem to engage little of the attention of a boy who is wholly immersed in his studies, and even so stirring an incident as the Bread Riots in Preston in 1842, when people were shot down in the streets, is left to be recorded by his brother. The latter left Preston in the spring of 1843 to prepare for Oxford. He read with Charles Conybeare at Filey, and was there joined by William who shared in his brother's studies during a holiday of twelve weeks. On returning to Preston, he describes the course of his studies to his father:

Harcourt to his Father.

PRESTON (*Undated*).— . . . I have been reading straight through the 23rd book of Livy, a labour sufficiently tedious, as the spirited speeches and animated details do not occur often enough to enliven the dullness of the regular narrative. I am now finishing the *Electra* of Sophocles, half of which I had read with Conybeare at Filey. I have made a few essays at Greek Iambics, and though not quite so successful as I could have hoped, I have found that

Filey Sophoclizing has been of much benefit, and may I trust have laid the foundation of great improvement in this particular branch.

When Owen Parr returns we are to make an attack upon the second book of Thucydides, the Orations of Cicero, and the *Prometheus* of Æschylus, which together with the divers sorts of composition and a certain *quotum* of mathematics will complete the bill of fare for this half year; I have about two hours every day for private reading which I devote either to collecting materials for composition from the studies of the day, to the writing of Latin Verses, or to the reading of Virgil, Juvenal, etc. I have accomplished at last the 10th Satire of Juvenal, and am now engaged in translating on paper the 4th Oration of Cicero against Catiline, which I conceive will be at the same time improving to my English composition, and give me a more intimate acquaintance with the style of the writer himself.

III

His days at Preston were drawing to a close, and the question of his career began to take shape as a practical problem of the near future. Associated with this question was the choice of University, and this matter is discussed with great elaboration in the following letter to his father:

Harcourt to his Father.

PRESTON, *November* 2, 1843.— . . . I am not sorry that some mention in your last letter of my future University life has given me an opportunity of laying before you my real feelings on this subject; you will not be surprised when I tell you that it is one which has occupied much of my attention, and on which I have been at some pains to gain every information, and now therefore I may with truth declare, that on this point I can, as far as my own private wishes and inclinations are concerned, unreservedly leave to you the choice and the decision, and that not only from a feeling of filial obedience, which in itself would be abundantly sufficient, but also from a conviction of my own judgment, that there are no reasons with which I am acquainted, cogent enough to induce me much to prefer the one or the other; for in either case I have found that manifest advantage is counteracted by equivalent evil, and that apparent evil is seen, on close examination, to be counterbalanced by proportionate advantage.

I have come to this conclusion, not from a consideration of the general system of education in either University, into which it was not my purpose to inquire, and to which, if it had been so, I should not have esteemed myself competent, but as regarded the application of either system to the tendencies and disposition of my own mind and intellect. I have long learnt to consider

γνῶθι σεαυτόν as the grand elementary basis of all inquiries, religious, moral and intellectual, and have therefore endeavoured, as best I might, to discover, from a strict analysis of my own mind, which of the two species of education was the best suited to foster and improve it. And so with respect to ambition and desire of distinction, I came to the conclusion that though the one course might be better adapted to stimulate and excite it, yet that the other would be more advantageously employed in reducing ideal ambition into substantial improvement. And on the other hand that though one system might impart more general information, and give a freer scope for the mind, yet that to myself individually, who I am aware am too much inclined to volatile and desultory courses, that system would be more useful which confines the thoughts and the energies to a single point or a single study.

He continues in this vein for more pages of quarto, and concludes in the same formal manner:

I must now conclude this letter, which I had intended to have written a week ago, but for whose composal I have with difficulty snatched half an hour from my time which is fully occupied, and I must therefore beg you to excuse the many defects which I know it to contain, but I shall fully have succeeded in my intentions if I have been able in it intelligibly to express to you the affection and obedience of your son.

Perhaps it was with the formidable and oppressive manner of this document in mind that the Canon, later, advised his son to be a wooer of the comic rather than the tragic muse, a hint that was to bear much more abundant fruit than the Canon could have anticipated. But though he is not yet the master of his instrument, his habit of mind and his literary tastes are already visible. In one of his last letters from Preston, written on May 30, 1844, he tells his father that he has read six books of the *Odyssey* and has "become an ardent admirer of the Maeonian Swan." But he admires Pope still more. He has read his translation of Homer and, faithful even at this early stage to the eighteenth century tradition that he preserved throughout his life, he proclaims his preference for Pope. "Though of course a translation can have no claim to originality or imaginative power, yet it seems to me that Pope has supplied that which was deficient in Homer, by polishing his rhythm, by adorning his images, by amplifying his obscurities, and by softening

his familiarities." With this taste for literary formalism, it follows that Thucydides is alien to his spirit. He does not find "those abstruse and recondite beauties, which are, I suppose, like the diamond flaming in the mine, to compensate the mud, or rather the solid rock, of inverted constructions and crabbed expressions, which must be *bored* through or exploded by the gunpowder of commentators before it can be worked with ease or satisfaction; and I would gladly exchange all the pith and the terseness of the Athenian historian for the amusing puerilities of Herodotus, or the elegant narration of Livy." He is more appreciative of Æschylus, "whose *Choephoroi*, with its huge apparatus of annotators, is now occupying and straining my attention." He does not yield to Thucydides in intricacy and obscurity, but he has at least the excuse of metrical restriction and an unmanageable Pegasus.

and, like his great master Homer, fills the mind with magnificent images and noble expressions, which convey their meaning to the poetical soul by a short cut and an untrod road, without submitting to the bounds and the regulations which limit geniuses of a lower rank. '*Coelum negata tentat iter via, Coetusque vulgares et udam spernit humum fugiente penna.*'

It is the *de Oratore* of Cicero which evokes, naturally enough, his most genuine enthusiasm.

I know not (he says) whether I ought most to admire, the subtleness of the observation, the conclusiveness of the reasoning, the copiousness of the style, or the aptness of the illustration. I have been reading this alternately with Homer, and shall not therefore accomplish more than one book of it before the holidays when I hope *Nocturna versare manu, versare diurna.*

Literature, at this time, is alike his work and his play, for outside his routine he is engaged on a verse translation of the *Pleasures of the Imagination*, and he employs his odd moments "in committing to memory those passages which I meet with both in English and classical reading which appear to me remarkable for the beauty either of their expression or thought." Mathematics are merely a necessary grind. "When I have said that I read them—*voilà tout.*" So much for the particulars.

As for the *tout ensemble* I find that a more regular system both of study and exercise has brought me nearer to that most desirable condition, of which you wrote to me in one of your letters, *Mens sana in corpore sano!* And as I find that the morbid prejudices of the mind train off with the unhealthy humours of the body, I am beginning to be convinced that the economy of the body has a much more intimate connexion with the welfare of the mind than I was before willing to believe.

Evidently he has had some parental advice as to his distaste for games, but he does not indicate the nature of the exercise to which he is now reconciled.

The end of the school days had now come. Harcourt was well advanced in his sixteenth year, and Parr's seminary no longer supplied his needs. Irwin, the mathematical tutor, had left for a curacy in the South, and as Parr's remaining pupils were at the commencement of their studies, no adequate successor could be appointed for one student. As for his classical studies Harcourt points out in writing home that he can pursue them alone or with his father's assistance. The date of his actual departure from Preston is uncertain, but it was probably in the summer of 1844. His father was still rector of Bolton Percy and Canon of York, and the next two years of Harcourt's life were mainly spent between the two residences of the family in completing his preparations for Cambridge, on which the choice had fallen. A glimpse of him is given in a letter from the Archbishop to the Canon:

Grosvenor Square, *June* 26, 1845.— . . . Your sons left me this morning and I can with great truth assure you that, in my very long experience, two more amiable youths I never saw. Your namesake is a *most extraordinary boy of his age*. Both were equally kind and attentive to myself.

His brother had now gone to Oxford, and it was intended that William should follow him thither. Emily Harcourt records that when her father received from his friend Dr. Ball of Christ Church a not very flattering reference to Edward's attainments, he remarked, "They will see the difference when William goes there." His success in mathematics seems to have led his father to change his mind

and send him to Cambridge instead. Emily Harcourt recalled him in these days of his early youth as cheerful and good-natured, but serious in his interests, full of sympathy with all suffering and "hot with horror of capital punishment." "I never remember receiving an impatient word from him," she said, "only constant appreciation. He took much interest in my reading and at this time took me on a tour amongst the architectural interests of Yorkshire, the great Norman Church at Selby, etc."

CHAPTER III

LIFE AT CAMBRIDGE

Entrance at Trinity—Shilleto and Maine—The Apostles—Conflicts with Fitzjames Stephen—Friendship with Julian Fane—Delicate health—A reading party at the Lakes—Debates at the Union—An offer from the *Morning Chronicle*—The choice of a career.

IN the autumn term of 1846, when he was approaching his nineteenth year, Harcourt went up to Cambridge, being entered as a gentleman commoner at Trinity College. His appearance at the University aroused interest on several grounds. He had reached his full stature of six feet three and a half inches, and though still, in his own phrase, "a cartilaginous youth," he carried himself with an ease and self-confidence that made him a noticeable figure in any company. The boldly sculptured face with its wide set eyes, strong nose and ample mobile mouth was instinct with intelligence and humour, and his general bearing had that suggestion of the gladiator which he carried with him to the end of his days. Masterful, buoyant, endowed with unusual natural gifts which had been quickened and enlarged by strenuous work, the most brilliant representative of a house allied with most of the families that still governed England, his appearance in the lists at Cambridge was something of an event. It has been described by Spencer Percival Butler, one of his contemporaries at the University. "When Harcourt appeared in the following summer term," he says, "he made a great impression on me. He was taller and handsomer than the others, and he knew more of literature and politics than any of us. He was witty and

full of anecdotes of distinguished men who were only names to me, and he had a talent for conversation which was very unusual."

In one respect he was at a disadvantage. Having been privately educated, he did not arrive at the University with a group of friends as was the case with young men coming from the public schools. But his reputation had preceded him. He had read with a queer tutor, whom he used to recall in after life, who was "half mad, got into great rages with himself, threw his watch into a clover field, and tore his portmanteau up because he could not pack it." But in spite of these oddities, he seems to have been a man of some authority at Cambridge, and is said to have spread his pupil's fame there before his arrival. Apart from this, Harcourt, owing to his abilities and associations with the world, was more mature than most first year men coming direct from the public schools. Two years before he had taken his brother Edward's place at a reading party at Thorpe Arch where he met Oxford men of distinction, Henry West, John Bode, Leveson Randolph and Goldwin Smith. Nor was he wholly without acquaintances at Cambridge. George Cayley and Reginald Cholmondeley were old friends, and on a visit to the Marquis of Northampton at Castle Ashby in the summer of 1846 he had met Lord Alwyne Compton, who introduced him into a set which he describes as "Comptonian," an adjective synonymous in his mind with "sensible and quiet." Another early friend at Cambridge was E. H. Stanley (15th Earl of Derby) who entered Parliament straight from Cambridge in 1848. Then as now Trinity sheltered men of widely different tastes. Harcourt was naturally an omnivorous and eager student, and gravitated inevitably to a reading, serious set. In the following letter to his mother he relates his first experiences at Cambridge.

Trinity College, 1846.— . . . Here I am domesticated at Cambridge. I had a prosperous journey to town though the train arrived very late; the tedium of the way was enlivened however by the vivacity of my *compagnon de voyage*, who from her accent was a

foreigner, and being addressed by her maid as miladi was I suppose a Countess. I did not discover the name of my fair friend, and the only conjecture which I could form from the style of her conversation was that she might be the Countess de Hahn who has I know been residing in England.

I passed the night very comfortably at the Euston Hotel and arrived at about one o'clock at Trinity, from whence I found my way to Thompson's rooms.[1] My reception was most gracious, he was very indignant when he heard that the Master had interfered to prevent my coming to read at Cambridge as originally intended, and said, "If your father had never applied to the Master there would have been no difficulty; it was a point on which I should have felt myself quite authorized to have given permission." I then inquired into the state of the case with regard to the *non ens*, which he said was a metaphysical abstraction which had more meaning at Cambridge than metaphysical abstractions are wont to have, but the long and the short of it is that I shall have to wait a year longer for my degree, and if I am a scholar of Trinity shall be compelled to reside at Trinity four years instead of three; he also said that he had foreseen for a long time that I should be placed in this dilemma but had foreborn to interfere through delicacy, having understood from the Master within these six months that it was not settled whether I should go to Oxford or Cambridge. From his rooms I went to Compton's whom I found at home; he gave me some luncheon and some hints with respect to Trinity etiquette to save me from making a fool of myself, to which you know I have a particular objection. I then found my way to my lodgings which are good enough in size, but the furniture is terribly *à la lodging*. I then decked myself in cap and gown, and proceeded to go to the Hall at 4 o'clock where the process of feeding is certainly anything but refined, in fact the old coach dinner was politeness itself compared with the manner in which *yahoo-like* each fellow seized hold of the joint of meat and cut off from it as much as he could for himself till his neighbour clawed it from him, and having triumphantly appropriated the last slice passed down the well cleaned bone to the wretches below. . . .

His letter to his father a few days later is concerned with College matters:

CAMBRIDGE, *October*, 1846.— . . . My examination on Thursday was even more of a farce than I had expected. They set one a long paper full of simple addition and subtraction sums and also some long division. I managed to do the former and cut the latter as being too laborious, at the risk of the examiner supposing that I had not read so far; however Lord Durham managed to get

[1] W. H. Thompson, afterwards Master of Trinity.

stumped as it is called here in his Euclid, but this only makes it necessary for him to undergo the same process in the course of a few weeks.

I went to wine with Compton yesterday, and met I suppose his select *familiares*, Lord R. Montagu, Lord Durham, a son of the other Lord Stanley, Coke, and Dent of Yorkshire, most of them very Comptonian, i.e. sensible and quiet.

I have determined at all events to read with a private tutor this term, though I am aware that I shall not be able to afford it hereafter, but it is of great importance for me to be placed in the first class at this Christmas examination, and there is here nothing to be done at least in Classics, of which composition forms so large a part, without *coaching*. Thompson has recommended to me Lushington, who is he says far the most elegant scholar in the college, and particularly practised in Latin prose composition which is made the chief point at Trinity, of which as I told Thompson I am almost entirely ignorant. . . .

Lectures begin to-morrow. Tell Eddie that Robert Owen is here at St. John's. He tells me that Mr. Parr has married his pretty servant Jane whom E. will remember, and that Cath. Parr is married. The former I hope may not be true (though I do call him Pecksniff), for the sake of his children, the second of course I could not be so uncharitable as to disbelieve.

With his love of intellectual combat and his passion for affairs, it was natural that Harcourt lost no time in joining the Union and taking part in its debates. But, like Disraeli on another stage, his first effort was something of a failure, and, like Disraeli again, the experience whetted his appetite for success. He tells the episode in a letter to his father :

CAMBRIDGE, *Tuesday evening*.— . . . My first speech was on the character of Mr. Canning, in which I am sensible enough that I broke down, though my friends were very good-natured and said "a successful first attempt" and all that. The truth was that intending only to make a declaration and not having the least idea I should lose my wits I went down without my notes, and found all at once as soon as I got on my legs that my heart was (like Bacchus in the *Ranae*) in my stomach. However I was determined not to sit down and worked off as well as I could. This you may imagine was not a little disgusting, but I don't mean to "say die" and am going about this week calculating when I shall try the argumentative style. I dare say you will laugh at all this, but it is not without its advantages. One which I value not the least is the introduction to Stanley, whom I like far the most of any one whom I have yet met at Cambridge ; his speaking is very good,

and his power of debating has a sort of hereditary quickness, though his manner is not graceful or effective.

In the meantime he was settling down to the more serious business of the University with characteristic industry. "You must consider that as yet," he tells the Canon, "we are a young pack not used to hunt together, and that the energizing principle (if I may be allowed to use a piece of Oxford cant) of individual emulation has not yet had time to produce itself. We are reading therefore it may be said upon the merits of the case, which may be steady but not brilliant, *neat but not gaudy*." While he was measuring himself with the pack, he had time to take stock of the huntsmen.

Our mathematical lecturer is a fat comfortable man with a bullet head and no shirt collars, with an eye-glass. He lectures on Euclid. The process is this. He desires one of us to demonstrate a proposition, which is accordingly done, with the more facility inasmuch as he appears equally satisfied with a wrong as a right demonstration. This over he soars into the seventh heaven of deductions into which he is followed only by two or three Daedaleian mathematicians who catch the proof almost before the enunciation has escaped his lips; some talk is held concerning it almost as unintelligible as the *Almagest*, and it vanishes at the same instant from the slate and our memories. I complained of this unsatisfactory species of conjuring to the Dean of Ely, who quite admitted the facts and recommended me not to trouble myself about the deductions which form the staple of our lecture, but to apply myself with diligence to the book itself, which advice I shall be very ready to pursue. And now for a lecturer of a very different stamp; Thompson is a man of fine though wicked countenance, large black eyebrows and eyes and a certain sneer about the mouth, a great contempt for everything academical, more especially the Master of Trinity and his own pupils; but for this affectation he is a man who would command respect, being evidently of extensive attainment and beyond the suspicion of pedantry; he is a great German scholar, and in the vacations lives much with the German literati. His lectures are not without traces of this intimacy in his love of profound inquiries into topics which Thucydides neglects as *ὄντα ἀνεξέλεγκτα καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ χρόνου αὐτῶν ἀπίστως ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνενικηκότα*.[1] His style is however in general enlarged, and

[1] Being irrefutable and having for the most part won their way by the course of time assuredly to the fabulous.

treats more of various men and various manners than of various readings. My private tutor is Lushington, who was senior classic and medallist last year and has the reputation of being the most elegant scholar in Trinity. If he has a fault it is that of being too shy and not visiting blunders with a sufficient amount of indignation. I read Thucydides with him, and also practise composition in which I hope to make some progress. These three lectures together with Sedgwick's take up the greater part of my morning, and the requisite preparation for them together with my composition occupy the larger portion of the evening.

When Franklin Lushington, one of a family which have been described as having an hereditary claim to distinction, fell ill, Harcourt read for a time with Charles Evans, of King Edward's School, Birmingham, and eventually with Richard Shilleto, who was for thirty years the leading classical coach at Cambridge. Shilleto had his defects. "You are Shilleto-ing," wrote Lord Stanley, who had then gone into Parliament, to Harcourt. "I grieve for you, knowing what you must undergo. Can you keep the little round, red man to his work? When I read with him, he used to talk by the hour instead of sticking to business. I never could get my fair pennyworth out of him, and his conversation did not compensate for the loss." There is a more friendly picture of the "little round red man" in Spencer Butler's recollections of his own and Harcourt's college days:

He was a most conscientious and devoted tutor. He might have taken his pupils in small classes, and so have multiplied his income as others did, but he never would consent to this though he had a growing family. He was a Tory of the old type, who was ready to die for the unblemished reputation of Anne Boleyn and Mary, Queen of Scots. He entertained us occasionally at supper, and on these occasions toasts and audit ale were drunk, and Harcourt, whom Shilleto admired greatly, used to be a little wicked. I remember him rising to his full height with great solemnity, and asking if he might propose a toast, and then, after much exordium, proposing the health, at this time when thrones abroad were falling, of the First Magistrate of this Realm! Years afterwards, when Shilleto's health began to fail, Harcourt obtained, by his recommendations to Mr. Disraeli, a Civil List pension of £200 a year for Shilleto, and on the death of Shilleto I was told that a pension of £100 was continued to his widow.

A more distinguished man with whom Harcourt read for a time was Henry Sumner Maine, whose appointment to the Chair of Civil Law in 1847 is described by Sir Leslie Stephen as the beginning of the awakening of the ancient University from its slumbers. Maine had been senior classic in 1844, and was thus only of three years' standing in the University when he received the Chair. "Maine cannot at that time," says Sir Leslie,[1] "have had any profound knowledge of the Civil Law—if, indeed, he ever acquired such knowledge. But his genius enabled him to revive the study in England—although no genius could galvanize the corpse of legal studies at the Cambridge of those times into activity. Maine, as Fitzjames says, 'made in the most beautiful manner applications of history and philosophy to Roman law, and transfigured one of the driest of subjects into all sorts of beautiful things without knowing or caring much about details.'" Harcourt fully shared Fitzjames Stephen's view of his tutor's rare genius. Maine was in India in the 'sixties when Harcourt as "Historicus" made the reputation which led to his appointment as first Whewell Professor of International Law at Cambridge. When he resigned he was succeeded by his former tutor.

Of the Master of Trinity himself there are only casual glimpses in Harcourt's letters, but in his later years, as the private diary of H. O. Sturgis, in recording conversations at Malwood, shows, Whewell furnished the subject of many lively memories. Harcourt loved to recall the verses which Tom Taylor wrote on the building of the Lodge of Trinity College, apropos of the fact that while Beresford Hope built it, Whewell took the credit for it:

> This is the house that Hope built
> This is the Master rough and gruff
> Who lived in the house that Hope built
> This is the Mistress tawny and tough
> Who married the Master rude and gruff, etc.

[1] *Life of Fitzjames Stephen* (Smith, Elder, 1895).

These are the Sinners cutting up rough
At sight of the tablet set up by a muff
Who built the house for the Master gruff.

And so on. It was not only Thompson, who succeeded him as Master of Trinity, who disliked Whewell. "Sedgwick was staying with my father," Harcourt told Sturgis, "when the news came of Whewell being appointed Master, and the curate, who slept in the room next Sedgwick's, heard him walking about and damning all night." Sedgwick had a rough and a picturesque style. "When he had lived for about fifty years in College," said Harcourt to Sturgis, "his chairs began to wear out, so he told his bedmaker to get him some new chairs. To his unspeakable wrath she brought him some with cane seats, whereupon he said, 'Woman, what is this that thou hast done? Do you wish me to go before my Maker with hexagons on my backside?'"

II

Before the end of his first year at Trinity Harcourt became an "Apostle." This famous society, limited at any one time as to its active members to a membership of twelve, dated back to 1820 when a group of lovers of literature and of free inquiry formed a society at St. John's for weekly meetings for essay reading and discussion, of which no records were kept. Later on Trinity became its headquarters. Although membership was limited, past members were admitted to the meetings, and an annual dinner in which old friends might meet used to be held at Greenwich. It was no mean distinction to belong to a society whose roll of members included at one time or another the names of Charles Butler, Monckton Milnes, Bishop Thirlwall, John Sterling, Alfred Tennyson, Arthur Hallam, James Spedding, W. H. Thompson, Charles Merivale, Sir Frederick Pollock, Henry Sumner Maine, Tom Taylor and Frederick Maurice. In Harcourt's day the group included H. S. Maine, Fitzjames Stephen, Julian Fane, E. H. Stanley (Lord Derby), H. W. Watson, the future Canon Holland, and others.

It would be interesting to have a record of the play of these minds one on the other. Sir Leslie Stephen says : [1]

> Mr. Watson compares these meetings to those at Newman's rooms in Oxford as described by Mark Pattison. There a luckless advocate of ill-judged theories might be crushed for the evening by the polite sentence, " Very likely." At the Cambridge meetings, the trial to the nerves, Mr. Watson thinks, was even more severe. There was not the spell of common reverence for a great man, in whose presence a modest reticence was excusable. You were expected to speak out, and failure was the more appalling. The contests between Stephen and Harcourt were especially famous. Though, says Mr. Watson, your brother was " not a match in adroitness and chaff for his great rival, he showed himself at his best in these struggles." " The encounters were veritable battles of the gods, and I recall them after forty years with the most vivid recollection of the pleasure they gave." When Sir William Harcourt entered Parliament, my brother remarked to Mr. Llewelyn Davies, " It does not seem to be the natural order of things that Harcourt should be in the House and I not there to criticize him."

It is true, as Watson indicated, that Harcourt and Fitzjames Stephen were the gladiators of the company. They were born for mutual conflict, each equipped with a powerful understanding, vigorous expression and a boldness bordering on arrogance, qualified in the case of Harcourt by his high spirits and the inexhaustible flow of his humour. Their antagonism had its roots in deeper things than the love of combat. Stephen's Toryism was ingrained and unalterable ; but Harcourt's Toryism was only a family tradition which was already losing its hold on him in the presence of the upheaval which was disintegrating political thought. The peace that had followed Waterloo was approaching its end, and the world was filled with the symptoms of social and political disturbance. In England a momentous breach had been made with the past. For more than half a century the idea of Free Trade had been growing in influence on the most instructed minds engaged in public affairs. The younger Pitt, under the inspiration of Adam Smith's epoch-making book, had been captured by the doctrine, and had put forward statesmanlike proposals

[1] *Life of Fitzjames Stephen* (Smith, Elder, 1895).

for its adoption, and though the Napoleonic wars effectually submerged his project, the return of peace and the lamentable condition of the people revived it and ultimately made it the dominant issue. The memorable association of Cobden and Bright—the association of the most illuminated and dispassionate mind with the most eloquent and passionate speech in our records—had prepared the country for the change, and the potato famine in Ireland completed their work. The rain had washed away the Corn Laws. Sir Robert Peel in bowing to the inexorable argument of necessity only gave expression to what had been his growing private conviction, but his surrender to the teaching of the Anti-Corn Law League shattered the Tory Party. The old guard of the party, under Lord George Bentinck, the Earl of Derby and Disraeli, remained a Protectionist rump, and the Free Traders with Sir Robert and his brilliant lieutenant, Gladstone, formed a new political group known as the Peelites. Harcourt took his place in the ranks of the Peelites. It was the first step in his political progress to the Left, and the record of his activities in the Union during his later years at Cambridge will show the rapidity with which his mind and sympathies moved in that direction.

III

But though Fitzjames Stephen was the most formidable opponent of Harcourt in the Society, there was another personality who made a more profound impression on him. Julian Fane is one of those elusive figures who flit through their time with a certain spiritual glamour that defies analysis, aloof yet pervasive, irradiating the general atmosphere with a subtle sense of character and leaving behind a memory all the more enduring and tender because it seems a perfume rather than an achievement. The deep affection which subsisted between Julian Fane and Harcourt —perhaps the strongest friendship in the life of either—throws more light upon the inner life of the latter at this time than any other circumstance. How profound the attachment was on Fane's side is indicated in a letter which

Robert Lytton (1st Earl of Lytton), who prepared the memoir of Fane, wrote to Harcourt from Vienna in December 1870, requesting him to contribute to the memorial volume:

> At that time there was no name which he mentioned so frequently or with so much admiration and affection as yours; and of all his college friends you are certainly the one of whose intellectual power and force of character he retained, in after life, the deepest and strongest impression. No one could so fitly or so appropriately as yourself present to the imagination of those who knew him not, the image of all he was at the time when you and he were in daily companionship at Cambridge; and any testimony contributed by you to the charm and brilliancy of his character, and the affluence of his intellectual gifts in those days, cannot but be much more flattering to his memory than the recorded opinions (however enthusiastically appreciative) of men far less eminent than yourself.

Harcourt's sentiments towards Fane are recorded in the moving tribute which, in response to this letter, he contributed to Lytton's memorial volume.

Fane was a later addition to the small company of the Apostles than Harcourt. Like his friend he was a man of unusual stature. "I am glad you have got Fane in," writes Lord Stanley to Harcourt, "though a few more such will give the world in general the impression that the standard of Apostolic recruits is set at six feet four, and that 'none not properly qualified need apply,' as the advertisements have it." He at once established a unique place for himself among the Apostles. "He was the salt and life of those well-remembered evenings," said Harcourt in a letter to Lord Lytton. "He had interest in every topic and sympathy with every mind; and when graver discussions were exhausted would delight us inexperienced schoolboys with the tales of the great world outside, of which we had seen nothing, and of which he knew as much as any man of fifty."

But Harcourt himself was not the inexperienced schoolboy, or if he was, it was in the Macaulayan sense. He had been brought up in the atmosphere of public life, he was treated by his father on terms of equality unusual for those days, and he had had at home, at Nuneham, and elsewhere many glimpses of the great world. There is no need to supply

reasons for Harcourt's attachment to a nature so sunny, so delicate, and so poetic as Julian Fane's, but perhaps this common knowledge of the world had some small part in the friendship with a man who had been attached to his father's mission at Berlin at the age of seventeen, and was thus able to set the doings of Cambridge against a wider background. W. H. Thompson, then Senior Tutor, notes Fane's marked preference for intellectual merit over rank and position in society. "One of his most intimate friends was a sizar, and with one exception, I do not remember," says the future Master of Trinity, "that he was intimate with any of the then fellow-commoners and noblemen." The exception alluded to was, of course, Harcourt.

But before these associations had become established, there had been a serious break in Harcourt's University career. As a boy he had, as we have seen, been delicate and disinclined to much physical activity, and the rapidity of his growth coupled with his intense intellectual life had doubtless put a severe strain on his system. Soon after his arrival at Cambridge he had some disquieting symptoms. "I have been on the sick list for a few days," he tells his father, "owing to a discomfort in my chest which my doctor who is a very clever and very satisfactory man ascribes to a little disorder in the action of the heart, in which I have no doubt he is right." The trouble seemed to pass, but in the autumn of 1847 the condition of his health made it necessary for him to suspend his university career and to winter in Madeira. It was a serious interruption of his studies, and it involved his absence from England during many important happenings, both public and private, including the revolution in France, the critical months of the Chartist agitation in England, and the death of his grandfather, the Archbishop. By the latter event the Nuneham estate passed to his uncle George Granville Harcourt, who was himself now a man well advanced in life, having occupied a seat in Parliament for over forty years, and being at the time Conservative member for the county of Oxfordshire. Another incident of some interest to Har-

court that took place during his absence from England was the engagement of his brother Edward to Lady Susan Harriet Holroyd, a daughter of the Earl of Sheffield.

In April 1848 Harcourt returned from Madeira to Cambridge. The public atmosphere in which he found himself is indicated in a letter to Monckton Milnes in which, after promising to bring some contributions to his *Cromwelliana* and mentioning that three new Apostles, Stephen, Stanley and Watson, have been elected, he says, referring to the fact that he is going up to London on his way to Yorkshire: "I shall take a big stick with me to town to defend my portmanteau on its transit from Shoreditch to the West End, which may be necessary as such articles are not a bad material for barricades."

The journey north was in order to join in a reading party with Holland and Evans (his tutor), both fellow Apostles, at Keswick. Harcourt's enforced idleness had put his work in arrears and his health was evidently still unsatisfactory. At Keswick he mingled work with a judicious amount of exercise. To his sister he writes a description of their walks:

> I have been once up Skiddaw with a man, who was spending his honeymoon here. He left his wife behind which I suppose you would consider wrong; there is a large supply here of people in the same condition. It is not a pleasant spectacle, any more than that of a person sitting in a corner eating his plumcake all by himself. Evans, Holland and I either walk by the lake or lie in a boat which we have got, and mix reading with talk. I have got you some ferns, one I think peculiar, which only grows above the height of 2000 feet. It is called something *cristata* and has two leaves perfectly different in appearance. I profit by Holland's experience, who is also collecting for his sister. The rest of the party talk of making a long expedition through Borrowdale to Ambleside and home by Patterdale over Helvellyn the next day. If I go it will be on four legs, as I cannot stand thirty miles of walking a day in this weather; though it is very fine for everything but waterfalls.

One day he went to see an exhibition of Cumberland wrestling, probably at Grasmere. "It was a fine sight," he tells his father, "and one might have fancied oneself in an ancient palaestra, nothing could be more good-natured or

harmless—we afterwards went to a ball and danced insanely." He and Evans paid a visit to Rydal Mount, but found Wordsworth out and contented themselves with a look at his garden, " with which, however, he does not seem to have taken any pains. The view of Windermere from it is very fine, though the steamboats rather spoil the romance." He saw Wordsworth later, but does not seem to have sought the acquaintance of Hartley Coleridge. He saw Whewell, who had come on a visit to his brother-in-law, Mr. Myers, " who is a clever man, preaches Carlyle and keeps agreeable society," and met Smith O'Brien's sisters who were staying at Keswick, and who were much shocked at the news of their brother's capture, " as they imagined they had received certain intelligence of his escape to the Continent ; he seems to have had an infatuated notion that the police force would sympathize with the insurgents."

With these diversions he mingled a lot of solid work. Writing to the Canon he says :

THE LAKES, 1848.—My classical tutor Evans has just left us. We have lost in him not only a good scholar but a very agreeable companion. I think I have gained a good deal of advantage from his instructions, having acquired more practice in composition, of which I did some every day, and also in accuracy in which he is particularly strong ; I read with him in Meidias which is the longest speech in Demosthenes, a play of Sophocles, one of Æschylus, and four of Aristophanes ; besides frequent examination papers in the harder passages of different authors. He gives me hopes of getting the University scholarship in my third year, but I have still a great many books to read, but which if I have health permitted me I shall be able to get through. I am now going to read Mathematics for a month with Hedley. I hope that this will still leave me some weeks of Eddie's society before his going abroad. . . .

IV

It was after his return from Madeira that Harcourt began to dominate the Union, of which Spencer Butler says he was considered the best speaker among several of unusual promise. His political views were now taking definite shape in a democratic direction, though they were still a little patchy, as some of the notes of his speeches, preserved with the dust

of years upon them, indicate. One set on the question of the adoption of the secret ballot reads strangely to a generation which has almost forgotten that voters once had no such protection. Then and up to the time when he stood for the Kirkcaldy Burghs in 1859 Harcourt was against the institution of a secret ballot. His notes for the defence of open voting include one to the effect that the assumption underlying the demand is that all landlords are tyrants and all tenants cowards, another on the advantage of canvassing because it brought the classes together, and still another with the more reasonable contention that the ballot would not do all that was expected of it because canvassing would in any case be continued, and that in case of the imputation of fraud there would not be the same power of scrutiny.

But in spite of occasional aberrations the trend of Harcourt's mind is now clear. The records of the Union debates from May 1848 furnish abundant witness of his developing sympathy with Liberalism. The first motion he proposed in the Union was "That the Game Laws are unjust in principle, injurious in operation and ought to be repealed." He carried this by 20 votes to 11, and had the satisfaction in later life of giving effect to his motion in a valuable piece of legislation. His next appearance in debate was less successful, but no less prophetic. It was a speech in support of the proposition, "That we consider the present system of indirect taxation as unjust in principle and injurious in practice; and therefore regard it as highly expedient that a system of direct taxation should be substituted in its stead." On this occasion the motion was lost by 8 votes. It was the common fate of the causes he adopted in the Union. He was learning to fight against the popular current, and no man probably ever had more joy in the experience, or more justification from the course of events. His life-long hostility to Imperialism, perhaps the most deeply rooted political motive of his career, was early indicated in his opposition to the motion, "That the policy pursued by Lord Elgin and the English Government in Canada is alike impolitic and unjustifiable." He had only

becoming Radical

one supporter on this occasion against a majority of 43, but history has abundantly ratified his judgment. He showed the same enlightened understanding on the slavery issue, speaking against a motion for the abandonment of the British policy directed towards the suppression of the slave trade, and on this occasion he had the satisfaction of being in the majority of 14 against 9. But his motion, which sheds an interesting light upon his attitude towards Ireland and religious freedom, "That it is alike our duty and interest to pay the Roman Catholic clergy of Ireland," was defeated by 72 to 24. He had, however, a handsome victory at the next debate in which he took part. The motion was "That the Revolution of 1688 does not deserve the name of glorious, but is rather to be considered inglorious and unjustifiable." This attacked all the fundamentals of Harcourt—his Erastianism, his evangelicalism, and his constitutionalism—and he had the satisfaction of carrying by an overwhelming majority the amendment "That the blessings of the Revolution of 1688, which established without bloodshed the Protestant Religion and a Constitutional Government, are especially to be acknowledged at a time when Europe is convulsed by political parties whose violence affords a striking contrast to the moderation of the two great parties who combined to effect the revolution of 1688." He proposed a little later a motion, "That the provision for the education of the people is totally inadequate, and that a large measure of state education ought to be immediately adopted"; but an amendment which, while accepting his motion, attached to it a clause in favour of denominational education was carried against him by 38 to 22. He was found a little later ploughing a lonely furrow in opposition to a motion which attacked the now admittedly wise policy of the Government towards the West Indian Colonies and at the next meeting was again in the minority in supporting "the foreign policy of the present Ministry during the last three years." He supported the motion, "That the principle that asserts that education is a necessary previous condition to the conferring

of the Suffrage is unsound," but he was beaten in the division by 20 votes to 5.

At this time the publication of Macaulay's History was creating an unprecedented stir in the reading world, and its brilliant championship of the Revolution of 1688 and of the Whigs led to a challenging motion in the Union, declaring "That the first two volumes of Mr. Macaulay's *History of England* are utterly wanting in the most essential characteristics of a great history." Harcourt, who loved both Macaulay's style and his theme, spoke against the motion, and had the satisfaction of seeing it amended thus, "That, without pledging ourselves to Mr. Macaulay's political opinions, we consider that his *History of England* deserves to be ranked among the master-pieces of English historical literature." As a good Free-Trader he supported the motion, "That the agitation in favour of Protectionist re-action is short-sighted and mischievous," and ineffectually opposed the substitution of the amendment "That this House views with feelings of the strongest disapprobation the apathy displayed by the present Ministry in considering the proper measures to be taken for the alleviation of the depressed condition of the agricultural interest in Great Britain." This ingenious device of getting a Protectionist verdict by a side wind was carried by 29 to 22.

But although Harcourt was now a firm Free Trader and had travelled far on the Liberal path, he had not caught up with the Radical advance guard, and we find him on November 27, 1849, speaking against the motion, "That this House considers Mr. Cobden and his party to represent the rising good sense of the nation." The motion was evidently *pour rire*, for not a single vote was cast for it and the "noes" numbered 47. The last motion which Harcourt proposed in the Union was, "That a property qualification is an unfit basis for the electoral franchise and that the suffrage should be extended, excluding only such persons as have been convicted of crime or are in receipt of parochial relief." It was beaten by 16 votes to

12. His final speech in the Union, on March 11, 1851, was against the ballot.

This Union record is important in estimating Harcourt's political character. It was the habit of his opponents in after life to attempt to discredit him by suggesting that he lacked sincerity and spoke from a brief. The breezy, gladiatorial manner of the man no doubt helped to give currency to this view. The very efficiency he displayed in the use of his quarterstaff was an argument against him, for no one could be so accomplished without being a professional, and to dub a man a professional politician has always been a popular artifice for disposing of a dangerous adversary. The humour with which Harcourt enveloped his political activities was also a factor against him. Just as Gladstone was regarded as dangerous because he was too serious, so Harcourt was discounted because he joked. A man who could have such fun out of his work could not possibly be sincere. This shallow view that high spirits and a humorous outlook cannot be reconciled with serious purpose—a view that would make an impostor of St. Francis and a suspect of Lincoln—has little support from the career of Harcourt. He did not make an idol of consistency or hesitate to shift his ground if events or party interest—for he was always a stout party man and held that the party had claims upon the individual which could not be ignored—made a change of attitude necessary.

But taking his career as a whole, few statesmen in modern times have shown so little divergence in practice from the principles to which they have given their adherence as he did, except when his judgment was temporarily warped in 1880–5 by his pre-occupation with the criminal activities of Fenianism. Emerging from an entirely Conservative home atmosphere into a dominantly Conservative university atmosphere he developed a reasoned view of government, based in many respects on a conception of Liberalism well in advance of the Whig thought of his time, and on no fundamental issue did he ever depart from it. If he shifted his

ground, it was usually to the Left, and a comparison of his parliamentary record with his undergraduate convictions reveals not only a rare continuity of thought but an even rarer loyalty to that thought in action. "Harcourt was a man who knew the difference between right and wrong," said Lord Morley to the writer, "and who never took the wrong side for any personal motive."

Harcourt's connection with the Union was duly rounded off by his election as Treasurer of the Society in the Lent term of 1849 and President in the Easter term of the same year. "I am President of the Union this term," he writes to his sister Emily, "which absolves me from speaking pretty much, but listening is almost as great a bore." It was probably the fame of his political debating in the Union, as well as the personal recommendation of Maine, that led to his first adventure in the great world which, in turn, helped to dictate his ultimate decision in regard to his professional career. The matter is first alluded to mysteriously in a letter to his sister. "What you will think still funnier," he writes, "is to hear that I declined a proposition which would have made me a rich man, at least to the extent of 6 or 700 a year, without interfering materially with my reading here (Cambridge). This is a secret which I will tell you about when we meet." To his father, a little later, he is more communicative:

CAMBRIDGE (*Undated*).—The offer which I declined, which however I had better not have mentioned but having mentioned wish to be kept secret, was that of writing for the Peel paper the *Chronicle*. The proposal was £20 for six articles whenever I chose to send them. I had no objections to the politics of the paper but did not fancy selling myself to their views altogether, besides which it might have been inconvenient if I had felt they had a claim on my time. Lord Lincoln and S. Smythe are the active directors and a man of the name of Cook is the Editor. I promised to send them articles now and then according as I had opportunities, thinking it as well not to lose sight altogether of a goose which lays such golden eggs. For "need 'twill no better be" an article a day is no very laborious way of earning £1000 a year. However, of course I never should look upon it in any light but that of a temporary expedient, for the occupation in itself is most precarious, and in fact I should exceed-

ingly dislike that any body out of the domestic circle should know that I meddled in any way with printer's ink. . . . I had young Hallam to breakfast with me this morning. He is come up to take his master's degree. Rogers's last is that "Croker in his article in the *Quarterly* meant to do murder but committed suicide."

The *Morning Chronicle* from which the offer emanated was the Peelite paper in London, and the "man of the name of Cook" to whom Harcourt refers was John Douglas Cook, who after a wandering and diversified career had found his true vocation in journalism, became editor of the *Morning Chronicle* and afterwards, on the foundation of the *Saturday Review*, editor of that journal. Cook had learned of Harcourt from his tutor and fellow Apostle, Maine, and came down to Cambridge to see the brilliant young undergraduate and to offer him a post as leader writer on his staff. It was a flattering distinction for a youth who was still only in his twenty-first year, and although Harcourt affected to treat it a little cavalierly and even contemptuously he understood its significance, and did not fail to grasp it. He began his contributions during the Long Vacation of 1849, his first article being one advocating a new Reform Bill, doubtless on the lines of the motion he supported at the Union during the following October. It was his custom, he used to say afterwards, to send his articles to London by train, paying an extra half-crown for immediate delivery. They were written in his earlier manner, sonorous, oppressively dignified, and with little of the sparkle that he developed later. It had the eighteenth century measure, and derived some of its qualities from a study of Junius. "I have just got hold of a new edition of Junius's letters which I am reading carefully," he tells his sister Emily. "The style is inimitable in that department of eloquence which is called invective. Though sometimes too artificial the sentences are always full of meaning, an excellence which is so rare that it may almost be called the highest. As to his identity, I suppose we shall have some opinion in the coming volumes of Macaulay, who is unquestionably the person living most competent to form a critical judgment on such a point."

V

The new task he had undertaken made no appreciable inroad upon the normal activities of Harcourt. He still wrote lively letters to his sister, giving her the gossip of the University—" Cambridge is terribly dull and I shoot in an archery ground when I am not dyspeptic. . . . Rob. Sedgwick is up here, and yesterday I met him walking down the street with a pineapple in his hand "—graver letters to his father about this, that and the other, and buoyant letters to Stanley who had been in America and had come back full of " Yankee tales," and had gone into politics fired with " Peel hatred," only less intense than his hatred of Cobden whom, says Harcourt, he calls " an inspired bagman who believes in a calico millennium." Harcourt was active against the " Romanizer in the Church," and wanted to have a meeting of undergraduates on the subject, " but the V.C. would not let us." The censorship of authority on matters political as well as ecclesiastical roused his anger. He writes to his mother:

Harcourt to his Mother.

CAMBRIDGE, 1850 (?)— . . . I have to read an Essay in Hall this week. My title was " Sir R. Peel and the Characteristics of Statesmanship." Would you believe that this was objected to by the authorities (I believe because Whewell is a Protectionist and reads the *Standard*). It was in vain that I protested that there was no allusion to Corn or Catholics and that Peel was only generally praised. I told Kimpson that I thought Trinity must be in a state of siege if liberty of opinion was denied on a matter which had commanded such universal concurrence even in foreign countries.

Meanwhile, he was pursuing his studies industriously.

" I have been doing little public speaking lately since my College Declamations, which are so far satisfactory that I am given to understand that I shall get a prize for both," he tells Emily.[1] " I live now secluded with two or three bosom cronies, of whom choicest and best Julian Fane. More's the pity that next term is his last up here. Besides I read Mathematics all the morning, Classics all the evening, and strange to say am well enough all the while."

[1] He won the Declamation Prize Cup.

But though he read mathematics it continued to be a distasteful subject to him, and was the source of the only serious check he sustained in his college career.

I went in a few weeks ago for the Trinity scholarship (he says in an undated letter to his father) and must confess I was a little disappointed at not getting it, though I knew I had another time to try. Thompson however told me that my Classics were very good and that he voted for me. I know that I did badly in Mathematics, partly because I have only lately begun to read them, but I did not even do justice to my moderate knowledge in the examination. However as Thompson told me that if there had been another scholarship to dispose I should have had it, I must console myself with the prospect of it next year. Thompson also encouraged me as to my ultimate prospects of a fellowship. I shall now work hard at my Mathematics in which my Coach gives me hopes of getting a low Wrangler's degree ; I am now reading the sesame of Mathematics, the Differential Calculus.

When the " other try " came Harcourt's expectations were justified, and he writes to his father :

Christ Church, Oxford, *Thursday* (1851).—As you will be the better satisfied, so am I the better pleased to find myself this morning in the first class in the Trinity list. To me it affords the additional delight which a fluke (an expressive word which it would weaken to explain by a windfall) always has over the wages of labour. Confidentially speaking it is no honour for there are thirty-five of us of whom I know that I am not the first ; and as to profit it is rather a *damnosa hereditas* as it consists in a permission to buy an expensive book with your own money ; and moreover I have lost a bet of five shillings which I laid against myself with Stanley ; so that independently of your approval I do not know whether I have not more cause to regret than to rejoice in my luck. I cut all my mathematical papers as my illness prevented me from reading any. But I must leave off talking of myself as I hope to-morrow to present myself in person as your affectionate son.

It is a little difficult to be precise as to the sequence of events in Harcourt's Cambridge life, for he had no talent for tidiness, and never dated a letter at that time. But the following letter, written apparently in 1850, is interesting as showing the ingenious way in which he was accustomed to make his political departure from the family tradition palatable to his father :

Harcourt to his Father.

CAMBRIDGE (*Undated*).—I was much amused by the account of the washing controversy; it is a better sign than I expected that the operatives should have taken so much interest in the question. The unvarying selfishness of the middle class seems to me the great argument for the extension of the suffrage. If the whole political power of the country is absorbed by the middle class, a consummation at present rapidly advancing, I do not see how anything is to be done for the working classes at all. If we are to have a dominant class I think the old one was much better; but if the operatives are willing to help themselves rationally, surely the sooner they are made *able* the better; it is very commonly argued I know that political privileges do nothing for social development, but the rapid advance of the middle class since the Reform Bill leads one to expect a similar result when applied to the class below them; and the denunciations of danger in the former case, which were so ludicrously falsified, incline one to regard without much dread the prophecies of the alarmists.

I cannot get up much sympathy for the Jews fight, for though I sympathize with their claims abstractly, yet from my personal acquaintance with Jewish individuals, I have such a horror of the race, as only to have the coldest convictions at their disposal.

Meanwhile I am drudging through mathematical examination papers; I never felt better up to work, or in fact at any time was less incommoded by that great origin of evil the stomach, which I attribute mainly to a medical discovery of my own, viz. a cold shower bath immediately before dinner, which enables me to digest the lumps of tough mutton of which our diet is composed. By this means I escape the mornings of lassitude and evenings of misery which made reading almost impossible last long vacation. I am getting quite fat under the process.

Tell the young ladies that I have found the effects of getting into a passion with them so productive of letters that I shall not fail to repeat it on future occasions.

The reference to digestive troubles in this letter probably explains the fact that he was prevented by illness from taking the degree in 1850 as he should normally have done. In a letter written to the Canon, probably in the Christmas vacation of 1850, he discusses his prospects in the approaching finals, and as the event showed gauged them very accurately:

University honours as a τέλος have never been a very strong lure to my ambition (he says), and therefore so long as you are satisfied that I have not neglected the advantages which you have

placed at my disposal I shall not be very solicitous about the event. . . . My ambition has always extended to a more distant and a wider field. I know how necessary a fellowship is to me in every point of view and I shall make that my great aim after the degree. It is somewhat unfortunate for me that I have fallen into a remarkably strong year ; the best batch of Classics, Thompson tells me, that has come up to Trinity since his own.

When the results of the Classical Tripos were announced on March 20, 1851, Harcourt's name appeared eighth on the list, among the names preceding his own being those of Lightfoot, Mayor, Whymper, Blore and Williams. Spencer Butler's name followed Harcourt's. In the Mathematical Tripos Harcourt was a Senior Optime, coming out about the middle of the list.

Bolton Percy, *Saturday*.—I am perfectly satisfied with what you have accomplished [said the Canon in writing to his son], and doubt not that this first trial of your wings will conduce to higher flights hereafter. You will be the better all your life for the hard and steady, or as Sam Johnson would have said " dogged " work which you have latterly gone through in your contention for a high academical degree.

The problem now before Harcourt was what direction those " higher flights " of which his father spoke were to take. The previous Christmas he had spoken of the necessity of working for a fellowship after he had taken his degree, but had added that his ambition had always extended to a more distant and a wider field than scholarship. The choice had now to be made. There was no doubt to which side Harcourt's own predilections leaned. Through his connection with the *Morning Chronicle* he had already smelt powder on the larger field of affairs, and to his combative temperament the experience could not fail to be exhilarating. No man ever had less of the spirit of the cloister, or more joy in drinking " delight of battle with his peers," and it was inevitable that a mere calculation of worldly interest must yield to his powerful natural disposition. Moreover he could not fail to be conscious of the unusual gifts with which he was equipped for the world of controversy and to be assured of the success that awaited

him there. The only serious consideration that led him still to contemplate remaining at Cambridge for the fellowship which would fall to him two years hence was the strong preference of his father for that course. Harcourt had a deep affection for the Canon and a high sense of filial obedience, and his hesitation in taking the plunge was due entirely to these considerations. He had naturally attracted the notice of the political leaders on the Whig side as a promising recruit to the cause, and had received from the Duke of Bedford an invitation to enter the political arena. This proposal he communicated to his father, who replied in a witty and sensible letter :

Canon Harcourt to his Son.

Bolton Percy, *May* 9, 1851.—. . . You have not yet I hope passed the Rubicon. What ought to be the first object of an honest man in pursuing a profession or choosing one ? To secure for himself, for the purpose of best serving God and doing good in his generation, that *independence* for want of which men make shipwreck of all conscience and self respect. Will politics give any poor man a reasonable chance of that ? You mention D'Israeli ; what are his chances of retaining office ? What would have become of him if he had made politics his profession without first marrying a rich wife ? What supported Canning in a similar position but his marriage ? You think perhaps D'Israeli might have lived by his pen ; that then would have been making literature, not politics, his profession ; is journalism to be yours ? I hope not. A fellowship of Trinity is a *real independence*, in sickness and in health, till you can turn the work of a *real profession* to account. No one was ever rendered *independent* by *politics*, except accidentally, and, after all, to live out the remnant of one's days as Burke did on a pension of £1200, with which he was reproached, is not altogether satisfactory.

Leave politics and the turf to rich men to play with, or if you look to politics, look to them only through the law, which inosculates with them naturally. Burke studied law industriously at the Temple, and in other ways prepared himself for Parliament with an assiduity not only in historical and philosophical researches, but in making himself conversant with old records, patents and precedents, of which you have no idea. He was a richer man too than you, for he was heir at least to a small landed property (he is said to have inherited from his father and uncle £20,000, with which he purchased Beaconsfield), and set out, long before he thought of Parliament, with a pension of £200 a year from the Irish Government, which indeed he resigned in dudgeon with the patron who obtained it

him. Let me add too that Burke began his course as he ended it not with *wild convictions*, but with writings directed to repress anarchical innovation, which doubtless favoured his early fortunes as well as his latter.

Is there anything in the position of political men now that makes politics more likely to insure a man independence than formerly? Does it not become every day more doubtful how the Queen's government can be carried on? Can any Ministry be insured six months' continuance in office? It would be the idlest infatuation, my dear Willy, to look to the troubled and muddy waters of the House of Commons for a profession in which to attempt working out your own independence, which I repeat it is on all accounts the object on which you ought to keep your eye steadily fixed. If you had been born with a silver spoon in your mouth it would have been another affair. Even then I should have dreaded your tongue outrunning your understanding, but were you disappointed in your venture it would be of less consequence; as it is, if the *Woburn angler* tickles you and turns you into his stock pond for the chance of your growing into a large fish for his table, without of course undertaking to *feed* you, and you find *short commons there*, you will not only disappoint him of his dish, but you will bitterly regret that you ever let him take you from your own natural stream where there are certainly flies to suffice for your support. My advice is stick to the waters of Trinity for the present at least, and let His Grace fish elsewhere. Take care of yourself for a few years, and you may become by and by a steady nurse for the *baby* people with a comfortable knowledge that if the baby cry and you are discharged you have somewhat to retire upon.

I think this is sounder advice than you will get from Dukes or Ladies, and that you must allow it to be so when you have wiped from your eyes those cobwebs of "fatalism" which you speak of. *Nos te facimus, Fortuna, deam*—must not be your motto, but *Nullum numen abest si sit prudentia. . . . Si quid novisti rectius istis—candidus imperti.* Unless you were to tell me candidly that you have been *accepted* by a girl with £20,000 and pledge yourself not to present me with more than two or three grandchildren, I do not think it possible for you in any degree to justify so desperate a speculation for an independent livelihood as the Duke would offer you.

Harcourt's reply has not been preserved; but on the main point he followed his father's advice. He did not accept the ducal overtures made to him to enter on a political career. It was not until eight years later that he contested a seat in Parliament, and he was forty before he entered the House of Commons. He was ambitious, but he was in no hurry, and he wisely resolved to secure his

independence before he adopted public life as a career. But in spite of his father's opinion he decided not to wait for a fellowship. His interests had outgrown the Cambridge atmosphere, and he resolved to try his fortune in the great world forthwith. His intention was to read for the bar, using journalism, as many others had done, as a stepping stone to a more profitable career. His connection with the *Morning Chronicle* had assumed a permanent character and gave him the assurance of a sufficient income until he had established himself in his chosen profession. This security was necessary, for he had no resources other than those his intellectual gifts could provide for him. Confident of the sufficiency of these resources he left Cambridge in the spring of 1851 and took up his residence in London.

CHAPTER IV

JOURNALISM AND THE BAR

Introduction to London Society—The Cosmopolitan Club—The Hyde Park Exhibition—The *Morning Chronicle*—Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*—Palmerston's fall—Puseyism—The Derby Government of 1852—A visit to Italy—*The Morality of Public Men*—A party at Woburn—The Aberdeen Government—Hard work in Chambers—The Crimean War—Life in the Temple—An affair of the heart.

ON arriving in London Harcourt established himself in rooms in St. James's Place with his friend Reginald Cholmondeley. He did not come as a stranger into the great world. While his influential connection gave him immediate access to the social life of the metropolis, the reputation he had made in the Cambridge Union was an introduction to political society, and his association with the *Morning Chronicle* brought him into contact with the literary and journalistic world. He was introduced to a little club, the Cosmopolitan, which met in Bond Street in the rooms of Robert Morier, then a clerk in the Board of Education, with his diplomatic career still before him. It met on Wednesday and Saturday nights for talk over a friendly pipe. Some of those in the original list of members, George Stovin Venables, Charles Brookfield, James Spedding and Harcourt himself had been Cambridge Apostles. Others were Robert Lowe, G. F. Watts, John Ruskin and F. T. Palgrave. Probably through his connection with Lady Waldegrave, his uncle's wife, he made the acquaintance of Rachel, the actress, then at the height of her unprecedented reputation, and among his papers are

some verses signed by her, and dated London, July 28, 1851. They were written to accompany a statuette of herself in Greek costume which she presented to him. His experience of Carlyle was less flattering, according to a story which Mr. Augustine Birrell tells. Carlyle was extolling Cromwell, when Harcourt intervened with the observation that it was a remarkable fact that all Cromwell's institutions crumbled with his death. Would it not be true to say that Ignatius Loyola had produced more permanent effect on mankind? Carlyle turned on him and said, "Young man, ye may be very clever; I daresay ye are, as ye're just from the University, but allow me to tell ye, ye are going straight to the bottomless pit."

These early days in London were diversified by week-ends at Nuneham, with which he now became intimately acquainted. "I spent Sunday at Nuneham," he tells his mother. "In fact, I am under a permanent engagement to go there every Saturday, and Uncle G. has ordered a carriage to meet me always on that day. She (Lady Waldegrave) recounted to me the other day the whole of her history. I assure you no romance could be more extraordinary, and considering the incredibly difficult position in which she has all her life been placed, I am more surprised at the good points than at the foibles of her character." His letters home at this time give evidence of a rapidly widening circle of friendships. Lady John Russell had invited him down to Richmond, "so you see after all there is some danger of my relapsing into a Whig." "Lady E. Bulteel who, as I think I told you, is a very charming person, has a regular reception on Mondays which I attended last night. The little Bertha is a great pet of mine, and the eldest daughter Mary something more." But his affections are still centred in his family. "It has always been my hope," he writes to his mother, "in the event of contingencies which I pray God may be far removed, that my lot should be cast in with you and my sisters, and that our home should be a common one. . . . For the rest I assure you I have at present no intention of seeking elsewhere the gratification of

a domesticity which I enjoy in such perfection at home."

The overshadowing social event of Harcourt's early days in London was the opening of the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park at which he was present and of which he sent an enthusiastic description to his sister Emily :

> *May*, 1851.— . . . As the clock struck twelve the Queen entered. I am told the crowd outside was perfectly incredible. She marched in procession up to the dais where she stood for five minutes bowing in acknowledgment of the cheers. She was dressed (I studied this particularly for the information of the young ladies) in a pink satin gown with a simple circlet of diamonds. At this moment the scene was very striking, the Queen standing alone in the very centre of that vast and beautiful scene looking at a distance a young and pretty woman, surrounded by a brilliant court, Prince Albert advancing to read the Address from the Commissioners, to which she replied, but at the distance at which I stood we could not of course hear. Then the Archbishop read a prayer and the Hallelujah Chorus was performed with great effect. This took about half an hour. The procession was then formed and paraded the whole building down the passages which I have marked by the double lines in the plan ; so that everybody had a perfect view of the Queen as she walked down looking exceeding pleased on Prince Albert's arm, he leading the Princess Royal who wore a large wreath of roses, and the Queen holding the Prince of Wales by the hand.

But the many social activities in which he engaged with so much zest implied no lack of attention to the practical purpose which had brought him to London. He entered at Lincoln's Inn on May 2, 1851, and pursued his law studies as a pupil of James Shaw Willes of the Inner Temple, who formed the highest opinion of his legal promise. Meanwhile he was earning his living by journalism, which continued to be his sole source of income until he was called to the bar and his main source of income for some years after he was called. His connection with the *Morning Chronicle*, begun while he was at Cambridge, had now assumed the character of a staff appointment and he largely shaped the policy of the paper on the principal issues of the time. The journal had been sold in 1848 by Sir John Easthope to a Peelite syndicate which included Lord Lincoln and Sidney Herbert. Under the new control the paper exercised a

powerful influence on public opinion, but it was financially a failure, the Peelites sinking, it is said, £200,000 in the undertaking, and at the end of six years it was again sold to a barrister who was said to have purchased it in the interest of Napoleon III, who had no more bitter assailants than the brilliant young men whom Cook had gathered round him. And the most formidable of these was Harcourt. His hostility to the pinchbeck adventurer who had trampled on the liberties of France with fraud and violence was couched in language of unrestrained vehemence. Thus, one of his articles begins: "The time is now arrived when, having gagged the press and destroyed the Parliament, transported the Liberals, robbed the Royalists, bribed the Church, exiled the Constitutionalists, hired the army and duped the peasants, Louis Napoleon thinks he may, without sacrificing the power of a Dictator, assume the situation of a Protector."

There were others besides Napoleon who had begun to take account of the young gladiator of the *Morning Chronicle*. In the political confusion at home he had become a force to be reckoned with and to be conciliated by the party managers. Public affairs have rarely been in so chaotic a condition as they were during 1851. The Ministry of Lord John Russell, which came into power in 1846 on the fall of Sir Robert Peel and the rupture of the Tory Party, was visibly approaching dissolution, and with it the political domination of the great Whig families was doomed to pass away. The policy of Lord John on the anti-papal agitation had gravely weakened his position. The issue by the Pope of a Bull under which England became a province of the Roman Catholic Church with a Catholic hierarchy endowed with territorial titles, had inflamed the public mind, already profoundly disturbed by the Oxford Movement, and Russell gave voice to the popular clamour in his famous letter to the Bishop of Durham of November 1850. There is no doubt that Lord John was seriously alarmed, though the wiser spirits saw that the affair was grossly exaggerated. Harcourt, writing to his sister at this time, probably

expressed what was the general opinion, however, when he said:

> . . . I was glad to see Lord John's letter against the Pope and Dr. Pusey. I hate the Pope, as Nelson did a Frenchman, like the Devil. Lord John with his usual astuteness is taking advantage of the Protestant haze, to raise a little wind in favour of the effete Whig Government. It is not a bad notion. If the Whigs choose to take up the strong Protestant side, they will gain much support from all those who are justly alarmed by the hierarchical projects of the Puseyites. On the whole I should think Wiseman never showed himself so unworthy of his name, for though the real danger is nothing there is quite groundwork for an agitation which will give Protestantism a fillip such as it has not had for many years.

But so far from giving a fillip to "the effete Whig Government," the affair substantially contributed to its downfall, alienating as it did the Irish contingent in the House and intensifying differences with powerful Peelites like Gladstone and Sidney Herbert, who were strong High Churchmen. When Lord John brought in the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, prohibiting the assumption by Roman Catholic bishops of territorial titles, he offended the Catholics without going far enough to please the Protestants, and John Leech hit off the situation in a famous cartoon in *Punch*, in which he pictured Lord John as a little boy who, having written "No Popery" on the wall, was seen in the act of running away. The Bill was passed, and of course became a dead letter, but it helped to prevent the success of repeated efforts by Lord John to strengthen his Government by securing the co-operation of the Peelite leaders. He had resigned in February after his defeat on the Locke-King motion for the extension of the franchise, and the Queen had asked Lord Stanley to form a Government. Stanley tried and failed, and then Lord John sought the help of the Peelites, but he was committed to the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, and had to return without them. In the autumn the effort was renewed.

Then came the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon on December 2, 1851. That incident had created widespread indignation in England, but the Cabinet very wisely decided that a

policy of absolute neutrality must be observed in regard to it, and sent instructions accordingly to Lord Normanby, the British ambassador in Paris. Palmerston, although he was Foreign Minister, privately endorsed Napoleon's coup, came into conflict with the Court and the Prime Minister, and was finally dismissed by Russell two days before Christmas. The rupture sealed the fate of the Government and of the Whig supremacy. Palmerston had not long to wait for his revenge.

Events in France had created a popular suspicion of the aims of Napoleon in regard to this country. The great Napoleon and his plans of invasion were still a living memory in the land, and it was not unnatural that the revival of Imperialism in France should lead to new fears and to a demand for action. To placate this outcry Lord John on February 16, 1852, brought in a measure for the re-organization of the local militia. Palmerston, who had been Louis Napoleon's friend and had probably as little fear on the subject as Lord John, promptly took the Jingo line, expressed his dissatisfaction with the Government proposals, and moved an amendment on which he succeeded in defeating his old colleague by nine votes. The Government immediately resigned. "I have had my tit-for-tat with John Russell," he wrote to his brother, "and I turned him out on Friday last." It was taken in good part by Lord John. "It's all fair," he said, "I dealt him a blow, and he has given me one in return."

The political atmosphere, on the eve of this crisis, is reflected in an undated letter from Harcourt to his father :

Harcourt to his Father.

I dined last Sunday with Uncle G. where I sat between the Dukes of Bedford and Newcastle, who seemed rather shy of one another ; the latter is very deaf. He said he knew Napoleon better than any man in England, having spent days alone with him in Scotland, and said, "I am as certain as that those two bottles are on this table that he means to seize Egypt."

I met Thiers and Duvergier de Hauranne at Milnes's at breakfast yesterday. Thiers laughed at the idea of Egypt, but said (in the presence of Van der Weyer the Belgian Minister) that he had only

to send 4,000 men into Belgium and he might have it when he chose. . . .

The Whigs will die as miserably as they have lived. I was at Lord Granville's last night where they all looked very miserable. Lord G.'s [1] will be a short tenure of office. The Peelites definitely refused to join *till after Lord Derby had tried a Government.* It is thought Lord D. has made a mistake in opposing unconditionally the Reform Bill.

I only go to political parties now which I do not consider waste of time. I receive every day bitter complaints against the *Chronicle* from the Greys ; [2] it will be quite a relief when they are out as they will be, as far as Greys can be, in a better humour.

The Duke of Bedford asked me to his box at Drury Lane on Tuesday, which was civil enough, as Lady Waldegrave had told him that I occupied myself in writing down the Government. I hope in my next letter to be able to announce the extinction of the Whigs.

II

" Uncle G." was evidently proud of the young relative who had come into his circle, and asked Lord Canning to meet " a nephew whom I have just discovered." He and Lady Waldegrave " have been very kind in taking me anywhere where I wish to go and also in getting up political dinners for me," writes Harcourt. It is to Uncle G. that " Lord John complains of the fractiousness of the Peelites to which I am proud to have contributed." And it is at Uncle G.'s that he meets at this time, not only the political dukes, but the statesman with whom he was to have the longest association of his career.

" I have made friends with Gladstone, who is the man of all those going I have most respect for," he tells his mother. Since Sir Robert Peel's death, Gladstone had been easily the most distinguished figure in the ranks of the Peelites, although the able and amiable Earl of Aberdeen was the official leader. Gladstone was the senior of Harcourt by eighteen years, had already a long parliamentary career behind him, and had entered on that duel with Disraeli

[1] Granville succeeded Palmerston as Foreign Minister, and did not hold his office much more than a month.

[2] Sir George Grey was Home Secretary in Lord John Russell's Cabinet.

which was to hold the centre of the political stage for a generation to come.

Like Gladstone, Harcourt was still in the transition state of a Peelite, and had no love for the Whigs, least of all for the Greys. "Layard's appointment I think will be popular," he says. "There will be one place at least not occupied by a Grey." He was especially dissatisfied with the Whigs for the poverty of their Reform Bill. He had in his Union days taken a strong and advanced view on the franchise question, and his first article in the *Morning Chronicle*, written while he was still an undergraduate, had outlined a drastic scheme of electoral reform. The timid proposals of the Whigs fell far short of his views, and he contemplated the fall of the Government with satisfaction.

But if he was hostile to the Whigs he was a still more formidable opponent of the Government which succeeded it. This was the short-lived Ministry of the Earl of Derby. It was a stop-gap Government without a majority and without a policy. Derby sought to make it a coalition by bringing in the Peelites and inducing Palmerston to take the Foreign Secretaryship; but the issue of Protection rendered the idea impossible of achievement, for Palmerston refused Derby's offer when he learned that Protection was not abandoned, and the "Rupert of debate" was thrown back upon the rump of the Conservative Party and the "Asian mystery" who was their one intellectual asset in the House of Commons. It is more than doubtful whether Disraeli at this time was still a Protectionist. He had thrown in his lot with the Protectionists in the great Tory disruption of 1846, and had written the life of the now defunct leader of the Protectionist faction, Lord George Bentinck. But his own views on the subject were always opportunist, and he had probably already realized that, as he said later, "Protection was not only dead, but damned." Lord Derby's path was not made easier by the suspicion and distrust felt by the old-fashioned Tories for the brilliant Jewish adventurer. They kicked, as Sir William Gregory

describes in his autobiography, "against the supremacy of one whom they looked at as a mountebank." They were impossible without him and miserable with him.

But from its birth the Derby administration was doomed, and the General Election in the summer of 1852 made its end, when Parliament reassembled in the autumn, only a question of Opposition tactics. The Liberal and Conservative Parties were nearly balanced and the forty Peelites who held the key of the situation were being drawn inevitably into the Liberal camp. Free Trade or Protection was still the dominating issue of domestic politics, and the course of events had justified the comment that Sir Robert Peel in declaring for Free Trade had "steered his fleet into the enemy's port." During the summer the accommodation between the Liberals and the Peelites made substantial progress, and the pen of the young leader writer of the *Morning Chronicle* became an important influence on the development of the situation. Apart from his work on the paper he was contemplating a broadside against the Government for the autumn.

In the meantime, having scraped together £100 out of his modest earnings, he indulged himself in his first visit to the Continent, taking his sister Emily with him to Italy. One or two incidents of the tour may be recalled as indicating the feverish state of continental affairs at that time. When he was walking one evening on the Piazza at Venice with some friends he declared that a number of the men about there were Austrian *mouchards*. This his friends denied. "Very well, watch me, and you will see," he said. Walking up and down with a cloak thrown over his shoulder he constantly mentioned in conversation the name of Mazzini, and in a few minutes he was visibly followed and almost surrounded by a number of the men, who kept him in view for the remainder of the evening. On the return from Venice, during the Customs examination on the Swiss frontier, his luggage was very carefully examined, and a shaded relief map of Switzerland was found in his bag and was stated by the authorities to be an *opera politica*.

He was removed from the *diligence* and elaborately searched ; the other passengers assuring his sister that he would almost certainly be shot, but he was released, though the map was confiscated.

Returning to England he proceeded with the task he had in mind. It was an indictment of Lord Derby in the form of an open letter entitled " The Morality of Public Men." It was signed " Englishman," and was published at the beginning of December 1852. The authorship of the attack was of course an open secret, and had an added interest from the fact that Harcourt was then and always remained a close friend of Lord Derby's son, Lord Stanley, a fellow Apostle and now a supporter of his father's Ministry. Lord Derby was himself one of the most brilliant and wayward figures of his time. Scholar, orator, sportsman, he belonged to a tradition that was passing away before the tendencies of what his son called " the calico millennium." There is an amazing glimpse of him in Greville in the April of 1851, when he was still Lord Stanley, and shortly after his failure to form a Government :

> At Newmarket on Sunday and returned yesterday. It was worth while to be there to see Stanley. A few weeks ago he was on the point of being Prime Minister, which only depended on himself. Then he stood up in the House of Lords and delivered an oration full of gravity and dignity. . . . A few days ago he was feasted in Merchant Taylors Hall amidst a vast assembly of lords and commoners who all acknowledged him as their chief. . . . If any of his vociferous disciples and admirers . . . could have suddenly found themselves in the betting room at Newmarket on Tuesday evening and seen Stanley there, I think they would have been in a pretty state of astonishment. There he was in the midst of a crowd of blacklegs, betting men and loose characters of every description, in uproarious spirits, chaffing, rowing and shouting with laughter and joking. His amusement was to lay Lord Glasgow a wager that he did not sneeze in a given time, for which purpose he took pinch after pinch of snuff while Stanley jeered him and quizzed him with such noise that he drew the whole mob around him to partake of the coarse merriment he excited.

But with all his defects he was a man of genius, erratic and incalculable, but of a certain chivalry and generosity. He had a high sense of his responsibilities as a territorial

magnate, and subsequently earned the lasting gratitude of Lancashire for his efforts to keep it on its legs during the cotton famine.

The theme of Harcourt's invective was that the Prime Minister had abandoned his political principles for the sake of office and had so degraded public life. He laid down the principle that political consistency was the foundation of party government, and defined consistency as "a middle term, which lies between irrational obstinacy and interested levity," accusing Lord Derby of both these qualities.

The publication of the pamphlet was well-timed, and it contributed substantially to the overthrow of the Government a fortnight later. It summed up the case against the Derby administration on the eve of the struggle, and brought the author still more prominently before the notice of the party leaders. "My third edition comes out to-morrow," he writes to Spencer Butler at Cambridge. "Gladstone, Lord John, the Duke of Bedford, his Grace of Newcastle, etc., have been very civil about the letter, and I think it will put me in a solidly good political position." He was the recipient of widespread congratulations. In the most exalted circles the pamphlet was discussed with approval. "The Queen," writes Greville in his Memoirs, "is delighted to have got rid of the late Ministers. She felt, as everybody else does, that their Government was disgraced by its shuffling and prevarication, and she said that Harcourt's pamphlet (which was all true) was sufficient to show what they were. As she is very honourable and true herself, it was natural she should disapprove of their conduct."

The evidence that Harcourt had, as he anticipated, put himself in "a solidly good political position" by its pamphlet was immediate. He was invited a few days later to a momentous gathering at Woburn where the imminent fall of the Government and the constitution of a Ministry that was to succeed it were discussed. Here the young man found himself in the company of the leaders of both the Whigs and the Peelites, and in their innermost counsels at an historic moment. Lord John had gone to consult his

brother, the Duke of Bedford, and the party was joined by Lord Aberdeen, the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Clarendon and Lady Waldegrave. At dinner on the first night there was no place at the table for Harcourt, whereupon Lord Clarendon remarked, "But he is the biggest man here." On December 16 the new Ministry had been provisionally agreed upon, and the company went off to London to hear Disraeli's[1] Budget destroyed by Gladstone in a speech of extraordinary power. They came back having beaten the Government and having missed a great meet of the hounds which Harcourt recalled as the event of their absence.

The new Ministry was a singular and not very promising compromise. The first difficulty was in regard to the office of Prime Minister. Lord John Russell was the obvious choice, but he was impossible because neither the Peelites nor Palmerston, with whom he had had so recent and open a disagreement, would serve under him. Palmerston was equally impossible, and though he agreed to join the Ministry he was ruled out of the Foreign Office, which was his only real interest in affairs because neither party would trust his provocative temper there. In the end the choice of Prime Minister fell upon Lord Aberdeen, the Peelite leader, a statesman of the old school, modest, singularly wise,

[1] Harcourt, at this time, as always, was politically opposed to Disraeli on almost every capital issue of politics, but he had a personal liking for him, and one of his articles in the *Morning Chronicle*, written after the fall of the Derby Administration, is devoted to a defence of him against the backwoodsmen of the Tory Party, in the course of which he said:

There is, however, about Mr. Disraeli this element of success—that he is never disheartened by defeat. We see, in the course which he has adopted since the fall of the Administration of which he was the actuating spirit, a change of tactics which indicates a sense of the mistakes by which his past career was marred. The truth is that, in his perfect indifference to one opinion as distinguished from another, the mistake of Mr. Disraeli has heretofore been to adopt in turn those which were on the point of becoming extinct. What he wanted was, not ability, but judgment. Experience, which could never give him the first, is by degrees teaching him the last. No one who has attentively marked his conduct during this session of Parliament can have failed to remark his anxiety to place himself in relation with advancing, rather than re-actionary, opinion. The Derbyites have already given him that

serene and unambitious, but with insufficient force of will to rule so brilliant and mixed a team. With him into the Ministry he carried the greatest of the Peelites, Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, while the leading Whigs, Lord John and Palmerston, went respectively to the Foreign Office and the Home Office. Neither Cobden nor Bright, the real authors of the policy that brought the Whigs and the Peelites into alliance and the leaders of the growing and virile Radical element in the country, were offered seats in the Ministry.

From the Woburn party Harcourt, flushed with his new honours, went home to York to spend Christmas. Soon after his return he moved from his rooms in St. James's Place to chambers at 15, Serjeants Inn, Fleet Street, where he found himself next door to John Delane, of *The Times*, a fact which was to bear important fruit later on. "I am immersed in the law," he writes to Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), "for which I have conceived a great passion, and hope one day with the help of the Pontefract Attorney to make a good job of." But he was no less deeply immersed in politics and journalism, and, tempted no doubt by the success of

of which they never can deprive him—a parliamentary position. He only required opportunity to make his abilities known, and that opportunity their necessities afforded him. As long as it suited his purpose, he ministered to their vengeance, their passions, and their prejudice. But he knew they had adopted him from no respect for his genius, but from a hope of his utility. If he has not altogether answered their expectations, it is not they at least who have the right to complain. He cannot have betrayed a confidence which he never received. . . . They have treated with gross and insulting ingratitude the only man of ability who has done any credit to their cause. They complain of qualities in him of which they were perfectly aware at the time when they availed themselves of his services. They find fault with the Liberal sympathies of a man whom they took to themselves from the Radical sheepfolds, and made him King over their Israel. They pretend to be offended at his sympathy with a race whose cause he ably advocated long before he enlisted in their ranks. They think that they can confine the ideas and the aspirations of a man of genius and courage within the narrow pale of their own bigoted prejudices. But they will find, as they have found before, that the man whose ability can make him their leader will also raise him above the dull atmosphere of their contracted views. . . .

his previous effort, he hazarded a second canter over the same course. He again—still signing himself "Englishman" —addressed Lord Derby in an open letter of prodigious length, which appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* dated May 23, 1853. Those were days when newspapers still assumed that the public were interested in the serious discussion of affairs, but even then it was unusual for a newspaper to print an essay running into four columns on the foundations of government. It was a leisurely time, and we must assume that people read it. Very nearly two columns are occupied with a description of the state of Europe, a prey to reaction after the unsuccessful revolutions of 1848, and the duty of a British government as the guardian of free institutions. Only then does Harcourt come to the real subject of his letter, the "profligate dispensing of patronage," which was, he held, a natural corollary of the absence of political principle:

> It was yourself who promulgated among your party the pernicious doctrine that anything was permissible in their relations with the constituencies which might tend to improve the position of your Government. You allowed prominent members of the Administration to bid for support by professions which you and they never intended to perform. Your Cabinet was a sort of political Sorbonne, in which each doctor was permitted to stamp with all the authority of Government, any opinion which might suit his fancy or convenience. You talked of compromises which were nothing but juggles, and principles which turned out to be no better than baits. All the baseness of the most profligate coalition was combined in a homogeneous party. Each individual Minister was in himself a coalition—at once a Protectionist, a Free-trader, a Tenant-leaguer, and an Orangeman. It was intimated to candidates that they must accommodate their professions to the sympathies of their constituents, and that it would be time enough after they succeeded to devise means for betraying their pledges and serving their interests.

If in these open letters he adopted a ponderous style reminiscent of Johnsonian English, he could write simply and straight to the point when he liked, and his usual articles move with a swifter and more energetic spirit. There are many hard hits skilfully delivered in the leaders written for the *Morning Chronicle*. In one of these the real accents

of the author of the Budget of 1894 are audible. "Why," he says, writing of Lord Derby, "did we never hear a syllable of 'native industry' and 'untaxed foreigners' till the land was touched? The National League is at least consistent; they say, 'We will have nothing cheap.' But Lord Stanley says, 'We will have everything cheap *except food*'! Strange exception? What can be the history of it? Can it have anything to do with rent?" And in these more spontaneous writings his wit was always fresh and searching, as, when referring to the Russell administration in 1851 he observes: "It was the glory of Ulysses to have seen many cities and nations of men—it is the misfortune of Lord John Russell that his acquaintance with mankind is confined to a cousinhood [1] remarkable more for the antiquity of their race than for the freshness of their intellects."

As a good Peelite, Harcourt became increasingly intimate with the Gladstones and Herberts. Gladstone had emerged as the hero of the new Ministry with the first of his historic Budgets. In reference to this event, Harcourt, writing (1853) to his sister, says:

> Gladstone's Budget is considered a great triumph. Lord John wrote to Mrs. G. to say that her husband's speech "realized his conception of what Pitt would have done in his happiest moment." In fact even the Peelites place it above Peel. It has totally shattered the Derbyites who have fallen back on the Irish brigade and consequently lost the confidence of the reputable part of their party.
>
> I don't do much society except political of which there is a good deal at present. I breakfast with Gladstone on Monday. Mrs. G. is a great ally of mine, as also Mrs. Sidney Herbert, who is the most beautiful woman it is possible to see.

It was probably at this time that G. F. Watts, who was one of the Cosmopolitan Club which met in Bond Street, made the drawing of Harcourt which appears in this volume, and it was certainly at this time that the Lawrence drawing of him now at Nuneham was done for Monckton Milnes.

[1] Mr. Herbert Paul points out (*History of Modern England*) that Privy Seal was the Prime Minister's father-in-law, Colonial Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer brothers-in-law; Home Secretary and War Secretary, cousins.

Among the many close friendships which Harcourt made in his early days in London, that with the future Lord Houghton, a man eminent for his genius for friendship, held a high place. He was one of the wide circle who shared in Harcourt's abundant letter-writing. "There are few things I value so much as friendship," said Harcourt in one of his letters, "and among my friends there is none whose affection I esteem more than yours." It was at Milnes's request that he sat to Lawrence. "I have waited to answer your letter till I had seen Lawrence," writes Harcourt. "He will gladly undertake the commission, and it will be a great charity as I fear, poor fellow, he is very badly off with a large family."

His general manner of life at this time is indicated in a letter to his sister:

Harcourt to his Sister.

Lincoln's Inn Hall, 1854.—At ten I go into my tutor's chambers where I work like a horse till five at pleadings, opinions, etc. I then scramble to get a little dinner, then a leading Art. till ten, then my own private law studies till two, and so to bed. It seems to suit me very well and I always find hard work suits both my mind and body better than anything else. One has no time to do what Palmerston calls "meditate on the immensity of the universe," which is a most unsatisfactory occupation. I am at this moment attending a lecture of J. G. Phillimore on Constitutional Law, and take the liberty of writing this letter as more improving than his inflated and ignorant declamations.

In the midst of his activities he finds time not only for society, but for literature. He continues:

Have you read the second volume of Ruskin's *Stones of Venice*? If you have not, beg, borrow or steal it. It is one of the finest things that ever was written, full of inspiring eloquence and genuine genius. It recreates Venice, and one felt in reading it not only as if one was there again, but when there saw much more than is revealed to ordinary eyes. You will be in ecstasies at the gorgeous description of St. Mark's, and the deeply pathetic of Torcello. By all means read it.

And here is a reminiscence, also recorded for "My dearest Em," of his social life:

I dine to-day with the Colonial Duke (Newcastle). In the evening I go to a soirée at General Webb's, a great Yankee who is over

here. You may have seen some months ago in *The Times* a controversy between him and that paper over the subject of the English false impressions of America. He swaggers a good deal but on the whole is intelligent and Anglomaniac. Lady Mahon complained to me the other day at Lord Clarendon's that she had been sitting at dinner by the American Minister and that he spat on the floor all dinner-time. I hear he does this to queer the Britishers, and does not practise those manners at home.

III

It is in his letters at this period that a cloud which was soon to overshadow the sky of Europe begins to claim attention. Writing to Milnes he says:

Harcourt to Monckton Milnes.

You will rejoice I know as heartily at the great moral lesson which Turkey is reading to Europe. I hope it may not be lost on the antiquated imbecilities of the Cabinet—a quality which I believe has descended even to its youngest members. It is ludicrous to see the discomfiture of Reeve, C. Grenville and the rest of the Bruton Street conspiracy. The White Cottage and the Cosmopolitan are open again and we have had some pleasant gatherings. Thackeray is in England for a few days. Higgins paid him and Doyle the compliment of telling him that it was assumed that D. wrote the letterpress and T. did the etchings—a pretty double barrel.

We do as much for Maurice as we can manage with the clog of our Damned Puseyites.

I have seen Clarendon and Newcastle several times. My impression is that the Government have done nothing, are doing nothing and will do nothing. The only hope for them is that the "solecism," as Gladstone calls the Turks, may yet drag the impostors through with as little disgrace as can be expected.

And a little later in November 1853—his letters are still undated—he says, writing again to Milnes:

Do you read the war which I (Jus Gentium) am carrying on against Venables in the M.C. [*Morning Chronicle*]?

I see Clarendon and Newcastle frequently, and had a long talk to old Aberdeen, by whom I sat at dinner at Molesworth's. The latter was very civil, and told Andalusia afterwards that "though he had ceased to be enthusiastic himself he was delighted to find persons who were so." This I suppose was in consequence of my blackguarding the Czar and Austria to him.

I can't reciprocate the compliment. Nothing can be feebler or

more contemptible than the tone of the Government throughout and especially since the Sinope affair.

The reference to the controversy with Venables deserves passing notice, for it records Harcourt's first incursion into the realm of international law. Venables had maintained in an article published on November 18, 1853, that by the outbreak of war pre-existing treaties between the belligerents became null and void. It was assumed that war "not only suspends, but abrogates, all positive conventions between independent powers." This contention was put forward in support of the theory that the terms of the Treaty of Kainardji enabling Russia to interfere in the interests of the Christian populations of Turkey were annulled by the outbreak of war between Russia and Turkey. This theory of the nullification of international engagements on the outbreak of war was based on the fact that many of the most important treaties of the past had taken the precaution of inserting recitals of former treaties which were to remain binding on the parties in addition to the new stipulations arising out of the war.

Harcourt sustained the contrary view in the series of letters signed "Jus Gentium," to which he refers Milnes. He protested against "the monstrous injustice of the doctrine that the breach of one contract vitiates all existing contracts," backing his argument by a long array of quotations from the judgments and the writings of international jurists. Positive conventions were, he declared, only suspended, not abrogated by war, except as regards the particular treaty from a breach of which the war arose. The letters are valuable for the light that is incidentally thrown on the diplomatic history of Europe from the Peace of Amiens onwards, but their chief interest from the point of view of this biography is the indication of the power in controversy on subjects bound up with international law which was to make Harcourt a considerable reputation in two hemispheres in the next decade. In style these letters are more ponderous and less finished than the famous series of the letters of "Historicus," but they show the same skill

in marshalling authorities, the same ability to discover the weak points of his opponent's reasoning, and the same enormous industry and persistence.

Meanwhile, the cloud in the East expanded. To Harcourt, as to others, it was a cloud of a beneficent kind. He shared the popular enthusiasm which the prospect of war rarely fails to awaken. He had yet to acquire that hatred of war which was to become one of the most constant and intense of his passions. When, long after, the Russians seized Port Arthur, he said, commenting on the popular mood of the time, "I remember Lord Aberdeen saying to me at the close of his life that he had never forgiven himself for giving way to popular clamour at the time of the Crimean War. I will not go down to the grave," he added, "with such a reproach on my soul." But at the time he had no hesitations, as the following passages from letters to his sister show:

Harcourt to his Sister, Emily Harcourt.

. . . No one now believes in peace. I have seen persons who have come from Petersburg, who all agree that the Czar is bent on fighting. His admirers are obliged to take refuge in the hypothesis that he is mad—just as people always say that a man who commits suicide is *non compos*. But the truth is, crime is a different thing from insanity, and it is sheer immorality to confound them. He will get, I take it, such a licking as will last Russia for fifty years. The Government believe in the sincere adhesion of Austria, I confess I am not so sanguine. That she will not fight for Russia is clear, because it would be destructive to her to do so; that she will fight against her I think much more questionable. Nothing can be better than the spirit of the public in the matter; nobody seems to grudge their friends to the cause of the country. The Sutherlands are quite pleased at Freddy's going the week after his joining; the only people disappointed are those who are left behind. . . .

There can be no doubt now that war has broken out. I never had any belief in the possibility of any other solution. The pretensions of Nicholas never had any other foundation but force, and by force alone they can be and they will be put down. I have very little doubt that the Turks will give the Czar a good licking. And if they can't do it alone we shall help them. It is plain that the Mahometans are much the best Christians of the two. . . .

The news from abroad is capital. Austria and Prussia have declared against Russia, Austria threatening to march an army

against the Russian flank if they cross the Danube. This makes either the destruction or humiliation of Russia certain; I should prefer the first, but should be satisfied with the last. Nicholas is now in the situation of Napoleon after his return from Elba, only without his genius or his generalship. If this attitude of the German powers had been assured before the last reply of the Western Powers to the Ambassadors, the Czar would no doubt have slunk out of his scrape under an affectation of moderation, but having withdrawn his ambassador if he retreats as he must, it will be obvious that he succumbs from fear. And so the prestige of Russian power is destroyed for the next half-century. Amen.

The kindest comment that can be made on this prayerful eagerness for war is that Harcourt was, in this matter, no wiser than his generation. The nation had enjoyed forty years of peace, and having forgotten what war meant fell an easy prey to the preachers of panic, and Harcourt fell with it. There was one consideration that might have been expected to save him from the general surrender of reason. No one in England had shown a more acute understanding of the character of Louis Napoleon or a more profound distrust of his motives, and Louis Napoleon was the true author and begetter of the Crimean War. That of course was not the popular judgment at the time. The heavy villain of the piece in the contemporary view was the Tsar, Nicholas. Time and its disclosures have so completely reversed this view that Nicholas is left the accuser rather than the accused. There are three chief offenders at the bar of history in connection with the authorship of perhaps the most foolish and gratuitous war on record, and Nicholas is certainly not one of them. The three are Napoleon, the Sultan and Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, the British Ambassador at Constantinople. Of these the chief sinner is Napoleon III. There are few more remarkable documents than the letter which Count Nesselrode, the Russian Foreign Minister, wrote in December 1852 immediately after Napoleon had assumed the Imperial crown. It is remarkable alike as a reading of Napoleon's mind and as a forecast of events. The letter was not written to Lord Aberdeen, but it was seen by him, and must have helped to strengthen him in the

struggle he made against the tide of mingled deceit, folly and betrayal which finally swept the country into war as the instrument of the French adventurer. In this letter Nesselrode prophesied that Louis Napoleon would seek to embroil Russia and Turkey, and analyzed with extraordinary perspicuity the calculations upon which he would gamble.

The fulfilment of this prophecy came in the following summer and autumn. Napoleon chose his ground well. He caused demands to be made on the Sultan for privilege for the Roman Catholic clergy in connection with the Holy Places. The demands were irreconcilable with the pledges which had been given to Russia by the Turkish Government, and when they were conceded Nicholas asked, as Napoleon of course had foreseen he would ask, for equal privilege for the Greek Church. It was so reasonable a request that its refusal could only be interpreted as a part of a calculated policy of affront. The trumpery issue was carefully kept open during the summer, autumn and winter, while the chief conspirators wove the web of events that were to lead up to "the inevitable war." Whenever a settlement seemed imminent one of the trinity threw a new faggot on the expiring flames. At first Aberdeen had the bulk of the Cabinet with him in his desire to preserve the peace, and it is probable he would have succeeded, but for the fact that throughout the British Ambassador at Constantinople was playing into the hand of Napoleon, by encouraging the Porte to reject the advice of which he was the official vehicle. When, following on the declaration of hostilities by Turkey, the Russians destroyed the Turkish ships at Sinope, the Ambassador exclaimed in a loud voice, "Thank God, this is War." From this moment Aberdeen's last hope of preserving the peace vanished. The war spirit had seized the nation, and the Cabinet was swept into the torrent of events.

IV

It was in the midst of this feverish time that Harcourt entered on his career at the Bar. "I am all surprise that

you are boxed up in Chambers and apparently callous about politics," writes Julian Fane to him :

VIENNA, *April* 20, 1854.—If I am in England, I must go part of the circuit with you and witness the taking of your legal maidenhood, which operation will be highly interesting. Seriously, I think you are quite right to take the Law in earnest, because I think you are quite sure to succeed in it, and I look forward with some confidence now to your making a *carrière* of it, if you do not suffer politics to lure you away to the H. of C. for a profession and back to the L.C. for an income. I suppose the preliminary work is tedious beyond measure, but, once started, your combative nature will, I imagine, greatly disport itself in a Court of Law, and I hope to witness its recreations.

On May 1 Harcourt was called to the Bar at the Inner Temple and began his legal career on the Home Circuit. In the following year, however, James Shaw Willes, with whom he had read law, became a judge, and took Harcourt with him as Marshal on the Northern Circuit. There he came in contact with some of the ablest men at the bar, including James Wilde (Lord Penzance), Colin Blackburne, the first lawyer of his day, Gathorne Hardy (Lord Cranbrook), Cross (afterwards Home Secretary), and Holland (Lord Knutsford). He returned, from this interlude, to the Home Circuit, and the story of his first brief there is recorded by Spencer Percival Butler :

It is a privilege, according to Livy in the fine Preface to his Roman history, to add to the lustre of the earliest annals by mingling with the human a certain element of the Divine. I am afraid that no such superhuman halo often surrounds the first brief of the young barrister. After I had followed Harcourt to the Bar, I remember him in his new wig and gown looking very nice, going before the Judge in Chambers, Mr. Baron Martin, a very strong Judge, with the guinea brief, as Counsel for the Defendant in a peculiar case. There was an old statute, under which where property belonged to two or more persons as tenants in common, and one of them occupied it in the absence of the other, a right of action was given to the other for an account of the profits which the occupant had or might have received. The ordinary Statutes of Limitation did not apply to actions brought under this Statute. A long account of the profits or presumed profits of the occupancy in this case formed a part of the brief. When the solicitors and counsel in the case came before the Judge in Chambers, the Judge looked in some dismay at the bulky account and said :

"Who are you for, Mr. Harcourt? and what is the meaning of this account?"

"I am for the defendant, my Lord," was the reply, "and I think you will be a little surprised if you look at the first item in the account dated fifty years ago."

"Hog's inwards 3*s.* 6*d.*," said the Judge. "This will never do; we cannot go into questions of Hog's inwards fifty years ago."

Solvuntur risu tabulae. It is not always that such complete success attends the future Solicitor General in his first professional experience of the courts of law.

His enthusiasm for his new profession was unqualified. "My mother has written me charming accounts of you and your visits to her," writes Julian Fane from Vienna on July 19, 1854. "She is so delighted that you have abandoned politics for law. I trust the practical part of the latter will interest you, and that your success on circuit may be as large as my love for you." He had no reason to complain of his progress at the bar. "I have been to Hertford and Chelmsford on Circuit, going on Thursdays and returning on Tuesdays, which I can do to all the towns on this circuit, which suits very well for *all* purposes," he tells his sister. "I shall have something to do at Croydon. . . . I have had a very fair share of business in town, and am in a great case with Sir F. Kelly in the Privy Council next week."

A pleasant picture of Harcourt's life in these early days at the bar is contained in Spencer Percival Butler's reminiscences of his friend:

During three years or thereabouts between 1855 and 1859 Harcourt and I and a common friend, Benjamin Gray, a fellow of Trinity and a barrister, occupied, for residential purposes, a charming set of Chambers at the top of No. 5, Paper Buildings in the Temple, which contained a large sitting room with oriel windows, overlooking the river, and on clear Sundays the Surrey hills also, and I think we all enjoyed it. We were all members of the Oxford and Cambridge Club, and generally dined there at the "Island" (as we called it), being a collection of two or three small tables in the central part of the room which could accommodate four to eight diners as required. There were several pleasant and some very witty men who were attracted by Harcourt to the "Island," such as Horace Mansfield, a fellow of Trinity, Garden, then Sub-dean of the Chapels Royal, Sir Francis Doyle, a friend of Gladstone at Eton and Professor of

Poetry at Oxford, one of the wittiest and most genial of companions, and Post of Oriel and Patrick Cumin of Balliol, and John Martineau and Sclater and many others; and sometimes Harcourt left us, and dined with Venables or Kinglake, the historian and author of *Eothen*, and reported to us their wise and weighty utterances. One day I remember his coming back to tell us that Kinglake attributed the super-excellence of John Bright's oratory to his never having enjoyed the disadvantage of a classical education.

Benjamin Gray was the son of a wealthy Manchester manufacturer and had a passion for all warlike things. One day, when Napoleon III was imitating Napoleon I and was reviewing his Army on the heights above Boulogne, he persuaded us, nothing loth, to run down to Deal, and engage a Deal lugger, which Harcourt believed to be the best boat you could sail in. We had a pleasant week-end, but only got half across the Channel. The wind and the tide, I believe crossed purposes, and we returned towards Deal, but the tide was then too low to let us sail or row across the Goodwin Sands, and we lay for some hours outside the Sands, while two of us in a small boat landed on the dry sand and took a walk thereon. On another occasion, we all three went over to Brussels and visited the field of Waterloo, without any mishap.

I find among my letters from Harcourt invitations in 1857 and 1858 to join him in Switzerland and in Austria. Something must have prevented us in 1857 starting so soon, for later in the year Gray and I went to the Pyrenees, and in 1858 a family death prevented me from joining Harcourt on a fishing expedition in the Salzkammergut which I should have enjoyed greatly.

In March 1857, I went with Harcourt to hear the close of the debate on the Chinese (*Arrow*) question in the House of Commons. It was expected that Gladstone would speak and Palmerston reply, and that the Government might be defeated, as a few of their supporters, including an uncle of Harcourt, were expected to vote against them. . . . Gladstone made one of his finest speeches, and towards the end of it, he said, "Having, Sir, adverted to the arguments founded on the municipal and international law, I now ask how does this question stand on the higher ground of natural justice? I say higher ground, because it is the highest ground of all. My Right Honourable friend was forbidden to appeal to the principles of Christianity. . . . As it seems to give offence, I will make no appeal to these principles, but I will appeal to that which is older than Christianity, because it was in the world before Christianity—to that which is broader than Christianity, because it extends to the world beyond Christianity—and to that which underlies Christianity, for Christianity itself appeals to it—I appeal to that justice which binds man to man." . . .

As he spoke, the thunder of his voice rolled, and he raised his arm to its full height, as an appeal to Heaven itself, and then moved

it majestically across as if to the full breadth of the world, and then dropped it to that which underlies everything, and binds man to man. The House divided, and Cobden's resolution was carried by a majority of 16, Ayes 263, Noes, 247. The House adjourned at half-past two.

As we walked away to the Temple Harcourt remarked—"If I had been in Parliament, I should have voted for the Government, but I should have felt uncomfortable about it after Gladstone's speech."

It will be seen from the above statement that Harcourt was living in 1855 in Paper Buildings with Butler and Gray. His business chambers he shared with Kenneth Macaulay. He lived in Paper Buildings until 1859, and was able at the general election of 1857 to vote in the City for Lord John Russell. As he and Butler were Liberals, they made their fellow lodger go to the poll on behalf of Lord John on the ground of the right of majority.

But although Harcourt established his position at the Bar with less than the customary delay, there was a moment in 1855 when he contemplated turning to another career. He had formed as long before as 1852 an attachment to a young lady, a member of a Devonshire family, to whom, in the August of that year, he had addressed some verses disclosing his thoughts about himself. "I am no judge of poetry," wrote the recipient in reply, with commendable caution, "and that the lines have pleased me very much is no proof of their excellence. I can only assure you that they are not thrown away, and I will merely add I hope one day to resemble more than I do now the character they describe." The attachment thus begun continued for some years, and it is from the diary of the lady's sister that we learn that Harcourt at one moment contemplated throwing up his career at the Bar. Under the date of July 3, 1855, she says:

There has been a most awful row about W. V. H. He has written to Lady Canning and applied for the place of Secretary to Lord Canning in India without ever saying a word to Mama or Maimee.

Whatever the cause of this sudden impulse events

decided otherwise. An entry in the diary on the 30th of the same month reads:

> Willes is made a Judge of India and he has given his business to W. V. H.[1] So the latter wrote off to Lady Canning to say that circumstances had occurred which prevented his wishing to have the place.

It only remains to be said in regard to this episode that Harcourt and the lady retained their friendship throughout their later life, and, as will be seen, occasionally corresponded. The lady married a distinguished public servant who was for many years one of Harcourt's kindest and most intimate friends, and they were closely associated the one as a Minister of the Crown and the other as Private Secretary to Queen Victoria.

[1] "When Mr. Justice Willes was made a judge," wrote Sir J. Hollams in *Jottings of an Old Solicitor* (1908), "he suggested to many of his clients that they should send papers to Mr. Vernon Harcourt. In consequence he was at that time constantly referred to as the 'Codicil.'"

CHAPTER V

THE SATURDAY REVIEWER

The Saturday Review—Liberalism *v.* Toryism—Opposition to Bright—Denunciation of Napoleon III—Palmerston's foreign policy—Disraeli and Gladstone—The Indian meeting—Hits at *The Times*—Social life—Tour in Switzerland and Italy—The Kirkcaldy Election—A Kirkcaldy Presentation.

WHATEVER the passing motive which led Harcourt to contemplate going to India with Canning, he had no reason to regret his change of mind. Not only did the promotion of Willes to the Bench enlarge his opportunities at the Bar, but a new and more brilliant phase of his journalistic career opened out before him in the autumn of 1855 with the establishment of the *Saturday Review*. Cook had not made a financial success of the *Morning Chronicle*, and when that organ was sold to the enemy he turned to weekly journalism. The *Saturday Review*, of which Alexander Beresford Hope, who had married Lady Mildred Cecil, was the principal proprietor and of which Cook was the editor, made an unusually brilliant entrance upon the stage. No journal probably ever started with a more accomplished team of writers. Cook had brought H. S. Maine and Harcourt with him from the *Morning Chronicle*, and among his other contributors were G. S. Venables, Thomas Collett Sandars, the editor of Justinian, Lord Robert Cecil (afterwards Marquess of Salisbury), G. W. Hemmings, Fitzjames Stephen, Goldwin Smith and later Walter Bagehot, and other men of present or future distinction. The paper was an immediate and in its

way an unprecedented success. It was admirably written, hit freely all round the wicket, and was critical rather than constructive. "If any one into whose hands the *Saturday* may since have fallen fancies that its success was due to political pepper, he is mistaken," wrote Goldwin Smith afterwards. "Its tone during its palmy days was Epicurean, and this was the source of its popularity in the circles by which it was chiefly supported. It was said of us that whereas with the generation of the Reform Bill, everything had been of the highest importance, with us nothing was new, nothing was true, and nothing was of any importance."

It was an attitude which admirably suited the combative spirit of Harcourt, and the ringing blows of his quarter-staff and his boisterous chaff make the pages of the *Saturday* nearly seventy years afterwards still gay and refreshing reading. The articles are so extraordinarily alive that it is easy to forget that their themes are the faults and foibles of a long past time. Johnson said of some one that his writing had not wit enough to keep it sweet. It is the riotous wit with which he envelops his subject that makes Harcourt's contributions to the *Saturday* as fresh as if the ink was still wet on the page and the laughter still sounded in the ear. It is Rabelaisian, or perhaps rather Dickensian wit, appealing to the plain man, without a hint of subtlety, but broad, direct, flamboyant. To the modern taste, the metaphors and allegories in which he revelled will seem sometimes to be carried to excessive length, but the gaiety with which he gores and tosses his victims is irresistible, and behind the invective there is so much good sense and sound feeling that he not only wins the laugh, but generally carries the argument. He was now, in a journalistic sense, the complete master of his instrument. He had freed himself entirely from the stiff and formal invective of "The Morality of Public Men," and from the sometimes stilted English of his *Morning Chronicle* leaders. He writes, as it were, in his shirt sleeves, out of a full mind and the abundance of his animal spirits, using the racy style and the picturesque

illustration which afterwards made him the most entertaining platform speaker of his time. His contributions were at first occasional, but as the paper flourished his connection with it assumed a different character. In an undated letter to "Dearest Em" he says:

> Circuit is just beginning, but I must write a line before I am off to Chelmsford. I have been very busy legally and otherwise lately. Professional work is coming in regularly and steadily. The *Saturday Review* has prospered so well that the proprietors have constituted five of us into a regular staff with a good salary, so that we write just as much or as little as we like, which is much more satisfactory than working by the job.

In his attitude to affairs, parties and politicians he was still very much of a free lover. He had been a Peelite and was now a Liberal, holding in the main by the policy of Lord John Russell, but with reservations. For Lord John, in spite of his zeal for parliamentary reform, remained a Whig, and his associates were chosen from the great Whig families. As Harcourt remarks in one of his articles:

> Lord John Russell returned to office in 1846, like the French emigrants, having learnt nothing and forgotten nothing; and the Government, as a matter of course, was again parcelled out, with cynical contemptuousness, among Greys, Russells, Eliots,—and again, Eliots, Russells, Greys. Without wishing to detract from the merit of particular individuals, people began to be sick of the Whig bill of fare—*toujours perdrix*. Since the Reform Bill, there have been half a dozen Whig Cabinets but there has never been a Liberal Administration.

And in one of his first contributions to the *Saturday Review* (November 17, 1855), he wrote the obituary notice of Lord John as the "Last Doge of Whiggism," using as the peg of his strictures a reminiscence of the tomb of Manin, the last Doge of Venice. He has no hope of Whiggism broadening out into the new current of Liberalism:

> The struggle of Whiggism in these days to transmute itself into Liberalism is like the attempt of an old mail coachman to turn stoker. He fails because he was not bred to the trade, and does not understand it—because it is alien to his nature, his habits and his tastes. . . . The mournful interest which attaches to the name of Manin will belong to Lord John Russell as the last Doge of Whiggism.

William Vernon Harcourt aet. 28.

after a miniature by C. Couzens, now at Nuneham

But if he despairs of Whiggism as the instrument of reform, he finds Liberalism vague and shapeless, and sets himself in a series of articles to define its aims and principles. Liberals are always, he thinks, at a disadvantage as compared with Conservatives, because they cannot, by definition, be content with things as they are, but must be prepared with a precise answer when they are asked what they really want. A constructive policy is always bound to be more difficult to state than the mere maintenance of the *status quo*. Liberalism cannot live on past achievements. It must live for the future or perish. Thus the Free Trade issue "is a thing of the past, as purely historical as the Glorious Revolution." Harcourt was to live to see it on its trial once more. He writes on March 21, 1857, under the homely heading "Pot and Kettle":

> It is not the métier of a Tory to have a policy, any more than it is that of a king to be a democrat. A Tory government may do very well without a policy, just as a country gentleman may sit at home and live upon his rents; but a Liberal government must do something for its bread, or else it will starve like a merchant without customers, a doctor without patients, or a lawyer without clients. If you see a quiet old gentleman, fast asleep, with a cigar in his mouth and his feet on the hob, it would be cruel if not impertinent to ask him where he is going to; but if you go round to the front-door, and see a knowing looking "party" on the box of a drag, with his hat on one side, handling a team of screws, and an Earl in a Windsor uniform behind, blowing a long tin-horn and touting for passengers, you may be excused for inquiring his destination and discussing the probability of his getting there. . . .
>
> . . . With a fatal blindness, the Liberal party seem rushing on to their destruction. They are eagerly helping the wolves to get rid of the watchdogs. Manchester vies with London in seeking to dismiss the men who have really stuck by the cause through good report and evil report. The article in request now is a dog warranted not to bark. A Government official is to be run against Messrs. Bright and Gibson, and Mr. Cobden is, if possible, to be kept out of the House of Commons. Lord John Russell is to be discredited, and Mr. Currie, good easy man, thinks he is going to squeeze Lord Palmerston into Liberalism. Did so foolish a bluebottle ever buzz on a chariot wheel?

The reference to Bright and Cobden is interesting. He wanted the watchdogs to be in the House to bark, but he

had not, in his progress to the Left, arrived at the Radical position. He was moving parallel with his fellow Peelite, Gladstone, and was as far removed from Bright and Cobden on the one hand as he was from the Whigs on the other. From Bright he differed radically on the question of parliamentary reform, and for a long time his attitude to that great man was hostile and scornful. He thinks this plainest of plain men "of all human puzzles the most perplexing." Like Rob Roy, he is "ower bad for a blessing and ower good for a banning." Harcourt is conscious of the "bold masculine force of his natural and not uncultivated eloquence" (an engaging concession which the Harcourt of later years would have enjoyed as much as any one), but he does not like his—Socialism!

> Socialism is the legitimate and inevitable corollary of Mr. Bright's doctrine. If want is the crime of the Government, then the duty of the Government must be to provide against want. This is Socialism pure and simple. It begins with national workshops, and ends with what Mr. Carlyle calls a "whiff of grapeshot." Mr. Bright may pretend to direct his attacks against the aristocracy alone, but it is the possessors of capital, the employers of labour, the great middle class of this country who have real cause to dread his revolutionary language.

The charge of Socialism seems an odd accusation to have been brought against the high priest of Individualism, but Harcourt was right in the long view. The Radicalism of Bright was shaping the future far otherwise than Bright himself foresaw, and Harcourt himself lived to declare that "We are all Socialists now." But if at this time Harcourt distrusted the views of Bright, he recognized his high courage and disinterested character, realized the importance of the presence of such a man in Parliament, and when, as the result of his opposition to the Chinese War, he was rejected at Manchester at the general election of 1857, he wrote (May 9):

> It may be very convenient for an Administration to rule with undisputed sway over submissive mediocrities; but if the standard of the House of Commons should ever be permanently degraded in public estimation the end of parliamentary government will not

be far off. The substitution of Potters and Turners for Brights and Cobdens is not a process which will bear indefinite extension.

There was too much respect for Bright's character evident in Harcourt's attacks on him to make those attacks quite convincing. It was far otherwise with two other persons against whom he waged relentless war in the *Saturday Review*. In spite of the episode of the Crimean War which had made England and France allies, Harcourt retained his profound and unchanging distrust of Napoleon III. The war in which that adventurer had so skilfully involved this country had come to a close on March 30, 1856. Its course had been as shameful a record of incompetence and blundering as its origin had been discreditable, and in the end Napoleon was as anxious to get out of it as, two years before, he had been anxious to get into it. With the fall of Sebastopol and the death of Nicholas the miserable struggle was closed and a peace was patched up on the basis of Russia relinquishing her control over the Danube and her protectorate over the Principalities and being forbidden to build arsenals on the shores of the Black Sea. Turkey emerged triumphant, thanks to the arms of the Christian Powers, having confirmed, on paper, the privileges proclaimed in 1839 to Christians dwelling in the Ottoman Empire. But of the fruits of that squalid war nothing endured. The neutrality of the Black Sea was cancelled in less than twenty years, and the massacres of Christians at Damascus, at Lebanon, in Bulgaria and Armenia were the comment upon the ally for whom we had sacrificed thirty thousand lives and added forty-one millions to the National Debt. Harcourt shared the popular feeling in England about the "premature" peace, and the fact that Napoleon was the active influence in bringing it about added to his abundant hatred of the Emperor. His attacks on him in the *Saturday Review* touch the extreme limit permissible in speaking of the sovereign of a friendly state. Of the French Assembly he writes (June 13, 1857):

For what purpose this fragment of a parliament was stuck up, it is rather difficult to divine. One would almost suppose that the

Emperor kept it only as an amulet to ward off the evil eye or to avert the Nemesis of a popular tyranny.

And later he denounces the Emperor and his associates as "that little gang of Italian conspirators who took the civilization of France by the throat on the night of the 2nd of December." On another occasion, in an article on the prosecution of Montalembert he says (November 6, 1858):

The Empire has existed now six years, but since the night of the second of December it has not gained one real convert—it has scarcely been able to purchase a solitary traitor. Plundered, insulted, gagged, persecuted, trampled on—everything that is noble, virtuous, and intelligent in France has opposed, and still opposes to the tyranny which oppresses it, a dignified and indomitable resistance.

He had abundant occasion soon after the war was over for the expression of his feelings towards Napoleon. The prosecution of Montalembert for criticizing the French Government outraged his sense of freedom and justice alike. He writes to his sister:

Harcourt to his Sister.

PARIS, *October*, 1856.— . . . I brought a letter to Montalembert and received a very civil note from him begging me to come next Friday to his house, apologizing for being so occupied with the prosecution which the Government is directing against him for a *private* letter disparaging to the Government which was published without his knowledge or authorization. The friends of the Emperor have in vain dissuaded him from pursuing the matter further, but in vain. The question of the prosecution was voted on yesterday in the Assembly of Deputies, who are mere dummies of the Government and carried by 184 to 51. It is only surprising considering the way the Government insisted on it that any of the members dared to vote against it. He will be tried next week by the Court of Police and his condemnation is therefore certain, as the Courts of Justice here never decide against the Government. Benguer is to be his Counsel and will no doubt make a splendid speech which I shall try to hear. It will be very interesting to meet the party at Montalembert's on Friday.

When, Montalembert having been convicted "according to plan," Harcourt returned, his wrath boiled over in the pages of the *Saturday Review*, in which he backed "the cause for which Montalembert lies in prison against the title by which Louis Napoleon sits on the throne." He had

a little later a more popular occasion for his invective. The French demand that England should abandon the right of asylum because of the evidence that the Orsini conspiracy against the life of Napoleon III had been hatched in England roused him as it roused the majority of Englishmen. Readers of *Richard Feverel* will remember how the boy was moved to challenge the French colonels whose addresses to the Emperor denouncing the English people as harbourers of assassins were published in the official journal of the Empire, the *Moniteur*. The Conspiracy Bill, introduced to modify English law in the direction demanded, was the immediate cause of the fall of the Palmerston Government in 1858. When in the autumn of that year Palmerston and Clarendon, then no longer Ministers of the Crown, saw fit to pay a visit to the Emperor at Compiègne, Harcourt expressed the general feeling of indignation at the action.

The Orsini case was the occasion of the first of the long series of contributions which Harcourt was to make to *The Times*. Under the pseudonym of " Lex et Consuetudo " he addresses two learned letters to that paper on the right of asylum given to aliens in this country. In the second of these (February 3, 1858), he says :

> Depend upon it the course which is adopted in this matter is of the very last importance, not to this country alone or to this present age, but to all nations and to future times. England is a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. To her alone is confided the charge of the sacred beacon which casts its hospitable rays athwart the dark waters of illimitable despotism. It behoves us, each and all, in our individual and collective capacities, to labour that she should do nothing unworthy of the last hope and refuge of Europe.

II

In this episode two cherished antagonisms of Harcourt were united. If there was any one who inspired him with more distrust than Napoleon it was Palmerston. The two main counts on which Harcourt attacked the Palmerston system in the pages of the *Saturday Review* are the bullying of the weak and truckling to the strong, the latter especially in the case of the French government. A spirited

foreign policy in practice meant truculence in China over the case of the *Arrow*, and in Greece over the wrongs of that typical British subject Don Pacifico, but subservience to French policy in great matters. He parodied the Palmerstonian attitude in a description of "Mr. Tomkins Abroad," and was unceasing in his protest against Palmerston's submission to French policy. Writing on August 15, 1857, on the acquiescence of the Government on the question of the Moldavian elections, and the union of the Principalities which had been opposed by Great Britain and Austria in the interests of Turkey, he says:

> But, after all, it is not the Eastern aspect of the question which is the most serious part of this miserable affair. It affords to Europe another conspicuous and shameful proof of that complete subservience to French diplomacy which is the key-note of Lord Palmerston's policy. Ever since the Emperor dictated to our Government the premature conclusion of the Russian war, the history of our foreign affairs has been one series of submissions to the Court of France. We really had hoped that, on this occasion at least, we might have dared to show that England could take a line of her own in the affairs of Europe. . . . The truth is, our attitude towards foreign countries is that of a man who on every occasion takes off his coat and then, when his adversary squares up to him, humbly begs his pardon.

He rejoices when the break between Palmerston and the Liberal Party at home and abroad is final and incurable. "The fate has befallen 'the spirited foreign policy,' which sooner or later overtakes all impostures—it has been found out." And in an article on February 20, 1858, under the heading "The Great Potato Doctrine" (Harcourt had a rare gift for the comic title), he urges that without disturbing the French alliance there might be less flattery on the part of England.

> We are asked to throw the weight of English public opinion into the scale of a precarious government which barely maintains a blood-stained existence by the sword, against all that is immortal in the mind, and all that is permanent in the character of the nation which it oppresses.

He was profoundly interested in the two men who were to dominate politics in the next generation. Disraeli he

liked personally and distrusted politically, while Gladstone's moral and intellectual qualities inspired in him a reverence which he had felt for no politician since the death of Peel. He took a mischievous delight in the incongruity of Disraeli with his party. "What do the Tories mean to do with Mr. Disraeli?" he asks, and he coins a *mot* that, "There is but one Disraeli and the *Press* is his prophet." Writing in 1857 on the prospects of a general election he showed a very clear conception of what must inevitably happen in the existing constitution of parties. He knew that however desirous Derby might be of a rapprochement with Gladstone and his friends for the purposes of opposition, there could be no alliance between Gladstone and Disraeli. The latter desired such an alliance. Greville records on April 3, 1856, conversations which show that "Disraeli appears to be endeavouring to approach Gladstone, and a confederacy between these two and young Stanley is by no means an improbability." Harcourt was obviously conscious of these approaches, probably through Stanley, with whom he continued on close terms of intimacy and of whose high character and liberal tendencies he had written in the *Saturday Review* with cordial praise. But, unlike Greville, he was convinced that there could be no alliance between the brilliant sceptic and a man to whom politics was not a game but a religion. "Mr. Gladstone's manly and liberal language, both written and spoken," he says, "on the subject of Naples, affords a sufficient guarantee that he has no sympathy with the sycophancy of absolutism which distinguishes all Mr. Disraeli's speeches on the foreign relations of England." The moral passion with which Gladstone touched political issues shook Harcourt out of his characteristic vein. Writing to his sister in March 1857, he says:

> Mr. Gladstone's speech was indescribably fine. One quite fancied one might have been listening to one of the managers of the Warren Hastings Impeachment.

The allusion is to Gladstone's speech on the *Arrow* case (referred to in the preceding chapter). That case, with

the Indian Mutiny, filled the public mind at the time. In the previous October a merchant ship, the *Arrow*, owned by a Chinese merchant and manned by Chinamen, but commanded by an Englishman, was boarded by a local mandarin who carried off the crew on a charge of piracy. The *Arrow* was not a British vessel and did not carry the British flag; but Sir John Bowring, the British representative, seizing the trumpery and dishonest excuse to further other aims, demanded the release of the crew, and when that was refused ordered Sir Michael Seymour, who was in command of the British squadron, to bombard Canton. From this discreditable beginning sprang a long and costly war. Harcourt shared the view of this shameful episode which Lord Derby put forward in the House of Lords and Cobden in the House of Commons. Writing in the *Saturday Review* on February 28, 1857, he pointed out that

> The public opinion of England and Europe will not be formed on the narrow point of whether the Chinese Government were or were not justified in boarding the *Arrow*. The real question which we have to ask ourselves, and which the historian of England will one day have to answer, is this—"Were the circumstances such as to justify the English fleet in bombarding a defenceless city?"

The debate on Cobden's motion of censure in the Commons led to the defeat of the Government, and in Harcourt's opinion Gladstone's speech turned the scale. Writing in the *Saturday Review* of March 7, he describes that speech as

> . . . worthy of the best days of English oratory, and in our time unexampled in loftiness of thought, felicity of expression and dignity of delivery. Those who have read it only, through the medium of the press, can form but a faint idea of the effect produced by the tone, manner and solemnity of Mr. Gladstone's appeal to the House to redress an injustice which the Executive Government had covered with its approbation, and which the nobles and bishops had declined to condemn. This oration is probably one of the few instances in parliamentary history in which the issue of a doubtful deliberation has been influenced by a speech. On this occasion (to borrow Mr. Gladstone's own words) "the cause was worthy of the eloquence, and the eloquence of the cause."

Palmerston took his defeat jauntily to the country, and came back pledged, as it was said, to nothing but "a spirited

foreign policy." He had carried the election not merely in the teeth of the Manchester school, but against Derby, Russell, Gladstone, and Disraeli, all of whom had denounced the shameless buccaneering in China. Cobden, who had moved the Vote of Censure, was beaten at Huddersfield, and Bright and Milner Gibson at Manchester. Lord John Russell kept his seat in the City contrary to general expectation, which was shared by Harcourt who, writing to his sister on the eve of the election, said, " I was at Lord John's the other night. He is in great spirits though I believe it is pretty certain he will not get in again for London."

It is noteworthy, in view of the famous series of letters which he was later to contribute to its columns, that during the first two years of his connection with the *Saturday Review* one of Harcourt's most constant diversions was to chaff *The Times*. It is often very good chaff. When it criticizes Admiral Dundas for failing to accomplish anything in the Baltic and tells him that it was Nelson's practice to go into every enemy port and harbour, he shows that, on the contrary, Nelson never did anything so foolish ; when " Absolute Wisdom," as proved by a circulation of sixty thousand, finds fault with the Government, Harcourt defends the Government ; when *The Times* ventures on advice to Lord Clarendon as to his policy at the Congress of Paris he remarks that " we cannot afford to compromise our reputation in deference to its swagger " ; when objection is taken to costermongers' cries the Saturday Reviewer finds that the costermongers have a right to live even if they " disturb the noonday slumbers of the contributors to *The Times*." He reminds the unknowing public that the same pen does not operate from day to day and that lapses from consistency may be due to " what an eminent man has called the *we-gotism* of journalism." He laments that the predominant influence exercised by journalists is unaccompanied by that " first security for public and private morality which is derived from the consciousness of personal identity and individual responsibility." It was a bold complaint to come from one who was himself an anonymous

journalist, but in making it Harcourt raised a question which has since assumed a gravity much beyond what it possessed in those days.

His Liberalism was still uncertain and shaky in places, but he had the root of the matter in him in his enthusiasm for liberty, and even his hostility to Russia vanished before the courageous action of Alexander III in abolishing serfdom. Writing on this subject in the *Saturday Review* on October 16, 1858, he says:

> There never yet was a sovereign who better deserved to attract the interest and sympathy of a free country than does the Emperor Alexander in the great work on which he is now engaged. The very nature of the task he has undertaken will inevitably cause the policy of his Empire to approximate more and more to the cause of liberty rather than to that of despotism; and perhaps we may not be too bold in hazarding the conjecture that England, hated of tyrants, may one day find in emancipated Russia an ally against the Absolutist conspiracy in Europe.

Of his life during these days there are glimpses in his letters to his sister at York, through whom he mainly communicated with his family. Extracts from these will serve to indicate his social and professional activities. They are all undated:

Harcourt to his Sister.

I have been leading rather a stagnant existence lately, not having had much to take me into Court, and so I have lived almost exclusively in chambers. Butler and I have made acquaintance with an Italian Count, who is to come once a week in the evening to brush up our Italian, as I mean to spend all my spare days in Italy. I enjoy it more every day I see it. . . .

Monckton Milnes and a few others are in town and we have pleasant evenings sometimes at the Cosmopolitan. . . .

. . . My companions left me on Saturday. I stayed till Monday by myself walking about the Lake Country, on which day I went to Lancaster. F. Wortley and I finding a steamer starting for Douglas in the Isle of Man from Morecambe (near Lancaster) took the Isle of Man on our way to Liverpool, leaving Morecambe at 2 p.m. and arriving at 8 at Douglas and leaving the next morning so as to arrive at Liverpool in the afternoon. I was charmed with the island, and the sea being perfectly smooth the expedition was most enjoyable. . . .

. . . I sat at dinner by Miss Talbot that was, the imprisoned nun, she is now Lady F. Howard ; she is pretty and rompish and seems very well pleased to have escaped a convent. . . .

. . . I went down in a hansom with Fortescue to the Rothschild ball at Gunnersbury which is near Kew ; it was a very fine show. The amount of Jewesses walking about studded with pearls and diamonds, and Jews in blue coats and brass buttons was surprising —for the rest dull enough. . . .

. . . I am glad you are come to a more just estimate of Swells. I dined yesterday with an unobjectionable one, Lady Newburgh, our Venetian friend. . . .

. . . I have written to Thackeray to tell him that he will be fed if he chooses at the Residence, and that you like all your sex are great admirers of *Vanity Fair*. . . .

. . . I have been writing a good deal in the *Saturday Review* lately. ' Making Things Pleasant ' and ' The Disraeli Shave ' are by me this week. . . .

The reference to the fact that he was " brushing up " his Italian with an Italian Count foreshadowed a second visit to Italy. This he made in October 1856. He kept his sister informed of his travels in a series of letters. In the first written, from the Hotel Mirabeau, Paris, he says :

. . . Two of the Sartoris, one of whom married a French lady, Mme de l'Aigle, are my companions in a very nice set of rooms. Henry Grenfell, Sir John Aston, G. Barrington and many others whom I know are here. The *Chronicle* correspondent acts as my cicerone—and so I am very well off. On Monday I went to the Cowley's box at the Opera. She is lively and pleasant. The *Prophète* was sung very ill by two French performers. Last night I went with the de l'Aigles to the Opéra Comique where a piece was played which has had a great run in Paris—" *l'Etoile du Nord* " ; the subject is Peter the Great. During the negotiations on the Eastern question there was great doubt whether it would be allowed to be performed. . . .

. . . On Sunday Lady Sandwich has promised to take me to Thiers where I shall meet Mignet the historian.

Continuing his journey, he writes to his sister on his way to Marseilles :

I am writing to you in the coupé of the express train from Paris to Lyons. It is a large comfortable carriage which I have all to myself with a writing table, etc., in which to-night (as I travel straight through to Marseilles) I shall lay the cushions on the floor and sleep as well as in bed.

Tell Ed. it is well worth the extra five francs one pays for this *place de luxe* as it is called. . . .

The final letter of the tour is written from Florence on October 14, and is full of enthusiasm for that city. "Except Rome and Jerusalem," he concludes, "there can be no place of such interest as this, and none, I think, can be so beautiful."

In the following year he spent his holiday in Switzerland, and the record of his experiences is contained in letters to his sister and his mother. One letter to the latter will serve to indicate his adventures:

Harcourt to his Mother.

Lago d'Orta, *September* 8, 1857.— . . . I must now give you Cap. 2 of my journey. My last letter to Em concluded my visit to Chamounix. On Monday, August 31, I started for Martigny by the pass of the Tête Noire which is not a hard walk though it takes seven hours. The Russell Gurneys accompanied me to the top of the pass. I then descended through beautiful chestnut groves into the valley of the Rhone. At Martigny I found a diligence starting at 6 p.m. up the Simplon, and there being no room I gave the conductor five francs for his place and travelled all night to Visp where I got to bed for a few hours and set off to walk to Zermatt at ten o'clock. It is a hard and tiring walk of nine hours and I did not get in till dark. At the hotel at Zermatt I fell in with Davies and Hawkins, two fellows of Trinity, friends of mine (I ought to mention that at breakfast at Visp I found Frank Freeman who was going in the opposite direction). The following day, Wednesday, was dreadfully wet. However Davies, Hawkins and I went up to the Riffelberg (a place where there is a small hotel, corresponding somewhat in situation to the Montanvert) full of plans for crossing the great chain of Monte Rosa into Italy by the famous pass of the Weiss Thor. On my way up I examined the Gorner Glacier which is very curious. It is advancing now, which is the case with few glaciers in Switzerland, and you see on each side the ground ploughed up and trees cut down as if only yesterday.

When I got up to the Riffelberg I found all the beds engaged so I had to sleep on the table in the guides' *salle à manger*. I slept, however, well enough, having given orders to be called at three o'clock if the weather was clear. My guide accordingly came and pulled me off my table and we were all off at four o'clock. In five hours we mounted the great Gorner Glacier which leads by the foot of the highest peaks of Monte Rosa into the great *Mer* not *de glace* but of snow which forms the basin of the chain. Here we saw

some chamois cantering over the great plains of snow which stretch all around. Leaving the Cima de Jazzi on our right we arrived after a long but not fatiguing walk of six hours over the ice and snow at the summit of the Weiss Thor. Here we should have had a splendid view of Italy, but though the weather was perfectly fine on the Swiss side we encountered a dense cold mist which rolled up from the valleys on the South and almost froze us to death as we sat down to eat on the summit.

In some respects perhaps it was fortunate as it hid from the inexperienced the dangers we were about to encounter. The descent from this height of 12,000 feet is almost perpendicular into the valley of Macugnaga. Forbes writing of this pass says, " The Piedmontese shepherd who occupied the chalet could give me no information respecting it and the range appears on this side so absolutely precipitous that I could hardly convince myself that any track could be found accessible to human foot. This pass is mentioned by almost every writer on Monte Rosa. Dr. Simpson says it is very dangerous but does not state that he had conversed with any one who had performed it. It is pretty certain that it has been crossed but once in the memory of men now living and then by a pretty numerous company."

This account, alarming as it sounds, is not now at least correct, as it has been crossed by many Englishmen in the last few years and I crossed it in a dense mist with only two guides. The descent commences with a table of snow going down almost perpendicularly not wider than a dinner table. I can fancy it would be nervous work if the weather was clear for on each side you look sheer down into the valley below, 12,000 feet. However, the snow was soft, and as I was tied with a rope by my waist to a guide before and behind, and as I sank at each step up to my knees there was no danger of slipping or falling over.

After leaving this ledge we came into a great snow basin. Here was the only really alarming part of the passage ; for five minutes in the dense fog it was evident to me that my guide had lost his way and could not find the track which led downwards. I have not often in my life known what it is to be afraid, but I confess for those five minutes I was very uncomfortable at the prospect of having to spend the night in such a position. However the mist lifted for a minute, and they hit off the track and we set off merrily climbing down the sheer face of the rock on our hands and knees. I thought at one time my hair was standing on end but was relieved to find that it was only the icicles, which had formed on my whiskers and all the hair which was exposed to the fog. We got down without further dangers, except an avalanche of stones which narrowly missed us, and arrived at Macugnaga at 1 p.m. I went to bed directly and got up at six o'clock to a good dinner, when I found my companions had arrived two hours after me. The weather

being bad in the Val Anzasca we started off for Lago Maggiore on Saturday and arrived at Baveno in the evening. I spent Sunday there, and walked over Mt. Monteone here on Monday. My future movements are very uncertain, but I have had enough of the mountains for the present, and unless very fine weather comes I think I shall walk for another week in Italy and then come home by Turin.

His next holiday excursion was to Austria, in search of good fishing. In September 1858 he writes from Vienna to Spencer Butler in London imploring him to join him at Ischl :

Harcourt to Spencer Butler.

The country deserves all that has been said of it ; from the accounts I hear the fishing is really magnificent and September is the best month for weather. I leave this in a few days. If you think of coming write by return of post, *poste restante* Ischl, to say what day you leave England, and buy at Jones in Jermyn Street a ten foot fly rod *pretty stiff*, a reel, a 40 yard line, and a hank of ordinary and extra fine prepared gut. I have flies enough for both, but bring two dozen black and red *palmers* of various sizes. If you come I can promise you good fun.

III

Although Harcourt had shown no eagerness to begin the Parliamentary career on which his mind nevertheless had long been fixed as his ultimate aim, there was something impulsive and even jocular in his first plunge into the electoral field. What led him in April 1859 to go to the Kirkcaldy Burghs to fight the local magnate is not apparent. He had no local connections, he was backed by no party machine, there was little apparent chance of winning, and he had no serious political hostility to his opponent. The constituency at that time had a meagre roll of 724 electors, and had been held for eighteen years by Colonel Ferguson of Raith, a local land and coal magnate whose position was regarded as unassailable. He professed Liberal principles, and stood for Lord John Russell and Reform, but he was roundly charged with neglect of his parliamentary duties. On the disgruntled burgesses of Kirkcaldy William Vernon Harcourt descended from London without any credentials

other than the energy, the ability and the buoyancy which were clearly discernible even on a first meeting. The Kirkcaldy malcontents had been looking for a local Liberal candidate to oppose the sitting member, but the persons whom they had approached, as Provost Birrell put it, "stood aghast at the bare idea of contesting these burghs which had long been known in the annals of the country as the burghs of Raith, not the Kirkcaldy Burghs." At this juncture Harcourt appeared, invited them to meet him at the Town Hall on April 12, 1859, and convinced them forthwith on his own unsupported testimony that he was the man to release them from the "feudal superiority" which had hitherto governed their choice of a representative.

It was a boisterous affair which resolved itself very largely into a duel between the *Scotsman*, then under its most famous editor, Alexander Russel, and the young barrister from London. "Sandy Russel used to smash me in the morning and I used to smash him at night" was Harcourt's way of describing the battle afterwards. The *Scotsman*, discussing the new candidate, complained that his political antecedents were unknown, and that the Harcourt family record was not a Liberal one. Nor was the fact that his grandfather was an archbishop any recommendation in a Scottish constituency, though it was admitted that this did not constitute a disability. "A candidate," said the *Scotsman*, "has appeared to contest these Burghs with Colonel Ferguson; his name is William Vernon Harcourt, but beyond this we know neither who nor what he is." This was Harcourt's real difficulty, and the point on which he was immediately heckled at the preliminary meeting in the Town Hall. Why should the electors support him, a stranger, who came provided with no political recommendation from any leader of the Liberal party, against the sitting member, also a Liberal. He claimed to be a follower of Lord John Russell, but so was Colonel Ferguson.

The only case put forward for the intervention was the need of emancipating the Burghs from the shackles of

feudalism. "Is the theory of representation to become in practice identical with that of hereditary rights?" was the keynote of his election address. But writing to his sister Emily he frankly treated the episode as a holiday adventure. "Whether I succeed or not," he said, "it is great fun and, what I care for more, excellent practice. I have to speak all day and all night, and assure you have become already quite a mob orator. . . . I shall spend very little money and assure you I never had so much amusement so cheap. . . . In a few days I shall be able to judge better of the chances of success, for which, to say the truth, I don't very much care." His lack of official support, however, was a source of disquiet to him and he described his dilemma in a letter to Lady Melgund (afterwards Lady Minto):

Harcourt to Lady Melgund.

KEIR, near DUNBLANE, N.B., *April* 17, 1859.—Having a holiday of canvassing I cannot resist taking up my pen to pay you the Sunday visit which must be omitted to-day. I started as I told you I intended to Scotland on Tuesday night and on Wednesday morning I found myself in Kirkcaldy. By the greatest luck it turned out that a Committee of discontented electors in that distinguished borough had just come to a resolution the night before to look out for a new representative. Of course I descended among them like an angel from heaven on a special mission to fulfil their righteous aspirations—in fact like a raven with an address in my mouth.

I started at once, made a thundering oration and secured the mob on my side. It is the greatest fun you can possibly conceive. I am all day surrounded by Scotch Baillies, Free Kirk Ministers and other interesting specimens of northern Zoology who regard me as a sort of divine speaking machine.

Of course Scotch questions were a little difficult at first but I provided myself with a Shibboleth which answers every purpose. I always say that "I perfectly concur in the views on that subject taken by Lord Melgund." This formula embraces everything from religion down to public houses and turnpike roads.

My opponent is happily universally detested so that I enjoy the agreeable position of the "popular Candidate." Of the result it is not easy to predict anything just yet. In all the other boroughs except Kirkcaldy I have a good majority, but of course the Raith influence is strong in Kirkcaldy.

I send you a copy of the *Scotsman* which contains a very bad report of my speech. It makes nonsense of a great part of it and leaves

out all the really important part at the end. But the quarrel between me and Russel of the *Scotsman* will amuse you. I am sorry I have not a copy of his answer to me yesterday. He of course attacks me violently about the *Saturday Review*, but I shall answer him to-morrow. I stand on *Lord John Russell principles*. The *Scotsman* declares I am the author of the abusive articles which of course I shall deny in public as I have already denied it to you in private.

I can't tell you how the whole thing amuses me. I am becoming I assure you quite an accomplished mob orator and whether I succeed or fail it is capital practice. None of the respectable people in the constituency will vote for my opponent—the difficulty is to get them to vote for me. They naturally enough ask "Who are you?" Our friend Russel is doing everything he can to prejudice them against me by insinuating that I am a Tory in disguise! Fancy that!!

My respectable friends of the Free Kirk say why don't you bring us a testimonial from somebody we know—in which I must admit there is a good deal of Scotch prudence and sense. If I had thought of it I certainly should have asked Melgund for a character before I came to Scotland. I am afraid that now he would not like to interfere. . . . However I shall fight the battle out as it is not in my nature to give in when I have once begun. It will in any event I think be a close contest. If I could get any one to give me a good Liberal character I should be sure to win.

I have stood out like a man against the Ballot and find the people don't really care about it when you have the courage to reason with them. . . .

But having, with characteristic waywardness, entered the contest as a free lance, Harcourt could find no Liberal statesman ready to back him against the sitting member who claimed to be as much a Liberal as himself. The other side telegraphed to Melgund and Russell alleging that use was being made of their names in favour of Harcourt against Ferguson, and their replies disclaiming support of the newcomer were posted throughout the constituency. The report was spread that he was a "Tory in disguise" and an "emissary of the Carlton Club." This caused a good deal of annoyance to Harcourt in his canvass, but the incident did not impair his good relations with either Lord Melgund or Lord John Russell. Lord Melgund wrote to him:

The receipt of a telegram (and its terms) from a place with which I have no connection or interest whatever, puzzled me. . . . Party

ties and old acquaintance with the Raith family would have made it impossible for me to place myself in an antagonistic position to Colonel Ferguson, gladly as under other circumstances I should have seen your success.

And Lord John Russell himself on April 27 wrote thus to the "Tory in disguise":

You will see that when appealed to I could do nothing else than adhere to my old party attachments. With your position and convictions, no one would have the least chance in an attempt to brand you as a social and political impostor, nor could I give the least countenance to such an unwarrantable course.

So much for the methods of political warfare. The result of the poll was:

FERGUSON 312
HARCOURT 294

so that it was only by a slender majority of eighteen votes, one of them cast by himself, that the "representative of feudal superiority" kept his seat. There were exciting scenes after the declaration of the poll. The street in front of the hustings was filled chiefly by working men, who had not then acquired the right to vote and who were with Harcourt to a man. It was in allusion to this fact that Harcourt made one of his most effective points in returning thanks from the hustings:

I remember (he said) an incident in the life of Napoleon Bonaparte. Once in a certain battle the French appeared to be getting the worst of it, and one of his generals seeing this expressed the fear that it was a battle lost. "No," replied Napoleon, pointing to reinforcements which he saw approaching, "I think it is a battle won." So (continued Harcourt) it seems now a battle lost, but (looking round on the cheering multitude whom he hoped soon to see emancipated) I think I see what will make the tide of battle turn.

The crowd took their revenge on the victor by refusing to let him speak. The attitude was so hostile that the Colonel had to stay in the inn in front of which the hustings were placed until the attention of the mob was diverted, when he started for home by a circuitous route. As soon as it was known that he had gone the mob started in pursuit to intercept him at the gates of Raith. The excitement was

so intense that a local paper put it on record that: "[Even on Sunday, when men's thoughts are generally supposed to take a much loftier flight than on week-days—alas, for human nature!—grave and reverend sages might have been seen during the interval between services arguing as to whether ability or 'use and wont' was henceforth to rule the Burghs."

The Sabbath-breaking sages would have been shocked if they had known in what hilarious spirit Harcourt was writing of his Kirkcaldy adventure. In a letter to Lady Melgund, written on his return from his Scotch raid, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Lady Melgund.

THE TEMPLE, *Thursday morning.*—I was very sorry not to find you at home for I assure you I am at this moment like Baron Munchausen's horn frozen up with pent-up laughter and write to you to thaw it out of me. In the presence of my Free Kirk friends and supporters I hardly dared to smile and I sadly want a vent for congested amusement by which my moral pipes are likely to be burst.

I shall probably go down to-morrow to Strawberry Hill and might perhaps have come to see you at Pembroke Lodge but for fear of snubbings past and to come in that quarter. Seriously I am sorry Lord J. thought it necessary to decline my personal adherence. Fortunately the "liberty of the subject" secures to me the right to remain attached to his principles whether he will or not. Is it not an odd state of things at present in politics where none of the followers choose to have leaders and the leaders in order to be even with them don't choose to have followers. However I will (is that Scotch or English for I have ceased to be quite sure) be a Liberal and an M.P. in spite of you all, and then I shall perhaps be all the better for owing to the Whigs nothing but—forgiveness.

However a truce to all this stuff. The long and the short of it is that I have nothing to regret for I have had the very best fun I could possibly have conceived. I have learnt to talk to mobs which is a blessed experience, I have sat under the Free Kirk and am greatly edified, I have pitched right and left into my foes and have returned amidst the benedictions of my friends. Can human felicity reach a higher point?

There are two things which I am most proud of—

(1) I have kept a whole Scotch community for a month in a state of laughter and enthusiasm,

(2) I have made them put their hands in their pockets, for the electors have subscribed four or five hundred pounds for a testi-

monial to me and the non-electors are to give me another. Could Orpheus even have done more with the stocks and the stones ? . . .

I hope you think that Bully of the North and our good friend the *Scotsman* got the worst of it.

At a meeting of his supporters after the declaration of the poll Harcourt had assured them that on the passing of the next Reform Bill they would find themselves with a majority of more than eighteen, and one owing nothing to feudal superiority. "I pledged myself to tell you that feudal superiority was dead. I tell it you now—feudal superiority is dead. . . . It is true that I have not gained a seat in Parliament, but yet you have acquired your independence."

There was an unusual sequel to the Kirkcaldy incident. So pleased were Harcourt's supporters with their candidate that they organized a public presentation to him, and nine months later, in January 1860, Harcourt, having been married in the interval, went with his wife to receive from the electors a trophy in the shape of a silver epergne, representing a giraffe under the shade of palm trees, and from the non-electors a silver claret jug. The local paper related with conscious pride that the epergne cost £125 and the jug £33. "I believe," said Harcourt on his return, "that I am absolutely the first Saxon who has ever taken bullion out of Scotland." Whatever the merits of these pieces of plate—and the épergne must have been alarmingly Victorian—they provided the occasion for a remarkable speech in which Harcourt expressed his distrust of the Emperor of the French and his views on Reform. In company with many of his contemporaries Harcourt was at that time uncertain in what direction Napoleon III might turn for adventure, and impressed on his hearers the need of answering the call for volunteers in case of invasion.

On the question of parliamentary reform and of taxation, the future author of the Death Duties Budget of 1894 was at great pains to dissociate himself from the doctrines urged by Bright in a speech at Liverpool, in which Bright had

advocated a tax on the realized property of the country.

Long afterwards, in a speech at the Glasgow Liberal Club (October 9, 1891), Harcourt, recalling the Kirkcaldy episode, said:

> Now my introduction to Scotland was not to study Scotch metaphysics. I came in a different capacity, and, I think, for a more practical form of education. It was when I was exactly half my present age that I, for the first time, crossed the border on a rash and daring adventure. Audacity is one of the characteristics of youth, and I came down to Scotland to contest against the feudal superior of the place. . . . I came to Scotland under great disadvantages, not being a Scotchman, but I had also one great advantage —I had a letter of recommendation, which I find always a passport to the confidence of Scotland—I had the vehement hostility of the *Scotsman* newspaper. That I found a constant source of support. It was very agreeable. But the *Scotsman* was not then exactly the same newspaper that it is to-day. It was under the conduct of a man who was an original genius—I mean Alexander Russel. He was a man, and there was no stupid glum philosophy about the newspaper in those days. It had a lambent wit and bright temper; it was a hard hitter, and was not incapable of reason. I enjoyed the contest in those days with the *Scotsman* newspaper. Mr. Russel wrote an article against me every morning, and I made a speech against him every night, and in the intervals of business he came over to have luncheon with me at Kirkcaldy. And for many years after whenever I came to Edinburgh I used to write a letter to him and I said—"My dear Russel—I have always maintained you are the most nefarious character in Scotland, and I hope you will come to dine with me." Well, Gentlemen, I was beaten, as happens to everybody in their time. I think it was a very small majority—twenty or thirty and the local influence prevailed. . . .

married

CHAPTER VI

MARRIAGE AND BEREAVEMENT

Miss Thérèse Lister—Lady Theresa Lister—Sir George Cornewall Lewis—A journey to Alsace—Death of Julian Harcourt—Birth of second son Lewis and death of Mrs. Harcourt—Sir G. Lewis's death—Harcourt's devotion to his little son Lewis—Last articles for the *Saturday Review*—Political work for the Government.

"WHO do you think will be here on Monday?" wrote Lady Minto[1] to Lady Charlotte Portal on December 31, 1859. "I give you twenty guesses; William Harcourt and his wife *en route* for Kirkcaldy. I am of course delighted, and as William (Lord Minto) admires the lady as much as I do the gentleman, and as they are coming a good deal out of their way to see us, it is to be presumed that all will be pleased."

The marriage had taken place the previous month, after a short engagement, and the journey to Kirkcaldy to receive the thanks of his supporters immediately followed the honeymoon. It was in August 1859 that Harcourt, writing to Monckton Milnes, had disclosed his engagement:

Hackness Hall, Scarborough.—I meant (he said) to have proposed myself to you for this week at *Fryston*, but unfortunately I have proposed myself to another *party* of the other sex.

Tell Venables with my best regards that I am going to marry a friend of his and a Radnorshire woman, and that I await his congratulations at Harpton on behalf of myself and Thérèse Lister.

I don't know if you are acquainted with my fiancée. If you are you will not wonder that I insist on being married in a month. I go to Harpton to-morrow.

Sir Cornewall [Lewis] told me he never could see that any body

[1] The Lady Melgund of the preceding chapter. Her husband succeeded to the earldom in July 1859.

wanted any thing to live on and the affair is all arranged on this "basis."

"You are going into a very distinguished family," replied Milnes, "and will be connected with the only man in England I look on as certain to be Prime Minister, so you will probably not be overlooked by a grateful country." He added:

I never forget what the phrenologist said about your mixture of benevolence and combativeness—but I find it difficult to get others to believe it. You are lucky enough to have found one person who does. May you be as happy as is good for you!

The lady on whom Harcourt's affections had fallen was Thérèse Lister, daughter of Lady Maria Theresa Lewis, the wife of Sir George Cornewall Lewis, by her first husband, Thomas Henry Lister, of Armytage Park, Staffordshire. Lady Theresa Lewis, who wrote *Lives of the Friends and Contemporaries of Lord Chancellor Clarendon*, was the daughter of the Hon. George Villiers and Theresa Parker, daughter of Lord Boringdon. On her father's side she was descended from the historian Clarendon, and on her mother's from Oliver Cromwell. Her brother, the fourth Lord Clarendon, had been Foreign Minister under Palmerston in 1855 and filled the same office in the Russell Ministry of 1865 and the Gladstone Ministry of 1868. Harcourt had been on terms of intimacy with the Clarendons for some time and had travelled with them in 1857. But at first he was not altogether *persona grata* to Lady Theresa who, writing to Lord Clarendon on November 28, 1858, remarks, "The article in the *Saturday Review* was odious and *bitter*, so I suppose it was Mr. Harcourt's." But her feeling underwent a change as the acquaintance grew, and we find her less than a year later, in a letter to her daughter, recording with great satisfaction that "Mr. Reeve told your Papa (Sir G. C. Lewis) that he had heard Willie conducting a legal argument before the Privy Council and was much struck with his ability."

There is a pleasant picture of Miss Lister in a letter written by Lady Minto, when the engagement was announced, to Harcourt himself. "Thérèse," she says, "if I may call her

so, has always been more *simpatica* to me than any other young lady of the London world, and I think the man very lucky whose house is to be brightened by her pleasant looks and joyous unspoilt nature." That the engagement was approved by the bride's family is evident from a letter to Lady Theresa from her sister-in-law, the Hon. Mrs. Edward Villiers :

The Hon. Mrs. Edward Villiers to Lady Theresa Lewis.

August, 1859.—Hurrah ! dearest Theresa, I really am so enchanted, but a very great surprise to me—not so to the girls—they had an inkling of it from their cousins. As for myself, I can safely say there is not one single man in the United Kingdom I could have welcomed half as cordially. He took my fancy from the very moment I first saw him. I think him splendidly handsome and a calibre of intellect that soars far and away above the generality. I found him perfectly charming at Florence, and as Thérèse knows have always said I would give the world to have him for a nephew. I consider him the *most* valuable addition to our already fascinating Family Circle ! And this is saying a great deal, for what I find is that when one sits in judgment upon the men, there is scarcely one whose society is worth cultivating. Of course there is no denying that William has a good deal of bitterness in his nature, but then you will seldom find a very powerful large nature without it. Your own noble brothers have all some. People cannot be thoroughly in earnest, active and vigorous for the right, without undue violence and prejudice at times for what seems to them all wrong.

Although Sir George Cornewall Lewis had told Harcourt that he never could see that any body wanted any thing to live on, he wrote to Canon Harcourt gravely enough on the subject of the finances of the young people. Sir George gave the figures of Thérèse's fortune. He thought it desirable that Harcourt should agree to insure his life for a certain sum, the amount to be considered. He expressed the hope that the marriage " not advantageous from worldly point of view " would be to the happiness of both parties. He spoke of the " clear and correct understanding, well regulated mind, sound moral perceptions " which gave Thérèse " an excellent practical judgment and discreet conduct in the affairs of life."

Harcourt wrote to his sister Emily on the same subject :

Harcourt to his Sister, Emily Harcourt.

I know, darling, that you are well aware of the deep love I have for you, and how earnestly I wish that your happiness like mine, may one day be complete.

I was obliged to spend the greater part of last week in London attending a brief (things which now cannot be neglected). . . . I have already secured a small house in Pont Street, which leads out of Chesham Place just opposite the Eliots into Cadogan Place. It has three rooms on the ground floor, two nice drawing-rooms, then two bedrooms, and on the third floor three very good rooms besides servants' wings. The offices are particularly good and the rent is only £120, which is very cheap; but I shall have to lay out about £100 on altering the ground floor. My principal difficulty at present is to know where the money is to come from to furnish with. However, I suppose ways and means will somehow or other be provided.

The marriage took place at All Saints' Church, Princes Gate, on November 5, 1859, at 11 o'clock, and the party breakfasted afterwards at Kent House, Knightsbridge, Sir George Lewis's London residence. Reginald Cholmondeley, with whom Harcourt still shared rooms, acted as best man. The relations between the bride and her mother were very close and affectionate, and the greatest satisfaction was expressed that the Harcourts' house in Pont Street would be within easy distance of Kent House.

II

The union proved one of singular felicity. There was no more marked trait in Harcourt's character than his inexhaustible fund of family affection, and with his marriage this amiable quality found expression in abundant correspondence with his new relations, especially Lady Theresa Lewis. On the visit to Kirkcaldy to receive the "bullion," he wrote, presumably from Lady Minto's house, a New Year's letter to his "dearest Mum" in which he said:

Harcourt to Lady Theresa Lewis.

I must write you a little note to wish you a Happy New Year and to thank you again and again for the precious New Year's gift which I have received of you. I assure you that I find every day more and more to love in my sweet wife, and she seems to me nothing

less than an angel. I did not think it was possible to love so much or to be so perfectly happy as I am, and I hope she is too. But it is impossible for any one to be otherwise than good to and with her. . . .

A little later, writing from the family home of the Lewises at Harpton, he says :

My dearest Mum,—I think you will probably like to hear some account from me of your little daughter and my little wife. Of course yesterday there was a *slight supply* from the waterworks in recollection of all the happy birthdays we had spent with you, especially when we went to visit her little maiden room. But on the whole I never saw her better than she has been here and it is so charming to find ourselves together in this delightful place. I assure you I am fully worthy of Harpton and all its beauties. . . .

Thérèse tells me this is the day on which " W. H. wrote a very foolish letter." However all's well that ends well and it has ended very well. You are quite right in saying that the day on which the darling was born ought to be to me the happiest of the year.

Mrs. Harcourt gave birth to a son on October 6, 1860. The child was named Julian after his father's friend, Julian Fane, at whose wedding in 1856 Harcourt had acted as best man. He was christened at All Saints', and writing to her mother on November 15, Mrs. Harcourt says :

I am sure we must all have felt grateful and happy at All Saints' last Monday and I most of all, for I am so much happier than any woman can confidently expect to be.

The child was delicate, and Mrs. Harcourt's letters to her mother are full of concern about his health. Another cause of disquiet is indicated in the following letter of Harcourt to Lady Theresa :

I assure you I deeply feel all I ought to repay you in affection for having taken Thérèse from you. In fact I think it is only you and I in the world who can really know all she is, for it requires to be always with her to know how constantly perfect such a woman can be. It is the invariableness of her goodness that makes the happiness of being continually with her. . . . Thérèse will have told you that in spite of all her eloquence she was not able to persuade Wilson that I had an " enlarged liver " though she said it always used to be so. However I have no doubt Homburg will brisk me up.

The visit to Homburg in the summer of 1861 was made a double debt to pay. Harcourt was at this time deep in the

interminable Bode case, and varied the drinking of the water with the discussion of law and the search for evidence in the case which Baron de Bode was bringing against the British Government. Mrs. Harcourt writes from Baden early in October to her mother:

Luckily Mr. Treitt was on the look out for W. and came to this hotel to inquire after him a few minutes after our arrival. He seems a jolly man and I hope will be useful. They are now deep in feudal law . . . to Strassburg on the 18th where we must stay several days for Willie to poke about amongst attorneys, etc., etc. So please direct there on the 15th. The result of all this is that we have given up the Tyrol and are going to pass the intervening days in Switzerland near Lucerne.

After some days in Switzerland Harcourt was at Strassburg "poking among attorneys." "He is in good spirits about Bode," writes Mrs. Harcourt, "and thinks he will find out some important points." Evidently he did, for writing himself to Lady Theresa he says:

Tell Sir C. that my Alsatian researches in the Bode business have been not only very interesting in point of law but very important in point of fact and to my mind establish completely the fraudulent character of the whole story.

Harcourt and his wife returned to meet an affliction which had long been threatened. On February 24, 1862, their child developed fever and brain disorder, and on March 2 he died. It was a bitter bereavement to the Harcourts. Writing to Thomas Hughes, in reply to a letter of condolence, he says:

Harcourt to Thomas Hughes.

Many many thanks for your kind note. We are indeed in great need of sympathy and kindness, for it is a very heavy and bitter blow. I really feel as if all my heart strings were snapped. My happiness was so wrapped up in the little boy that I feel it must be very long before either mind or body can rally from the shock. My wife bears up with an angelic courage. Women behave better in their trials because they *are* better. Watts did for me yesterday a sketch from the cold clay which Perugino might have envied. It really is my little darling as he lived. I shall write on his grave, "For this angel doth always behold the face of my father which is in heaven." We carry him to-morrow to the Nuneham Churchyard

and put him to bed (as I have so often done) for the last time. Thank you again.

There was a deeper shadow soon to fall over the domestic happiness of Harcourt. In the spring he took his wife abroad to Brussels and Liége on a tour of healing, and as the summer advanced he found relief in the heavy professional and semi-public tasks which were falling upon him. But early in the following year he suffered a crowning bereavement. On January 31, 1863, his wife gave birth to her second son, Lewis, the late Viscount Harcourt, and died on the same day. It was a shattering blow that darkened all the summer of 1863. We find him in the following September writing to Spencer Butler from Scotland, where he had been on a round of visits to the Argylls at Inverary, the Russells at Meiklour and the Mintos at Minto, and confessing that he can find no relief. "I don't think Scotland has answered to me either in health, spirits or sport. We have had very little shooting for our money, and I find my mind will not bear a month's idleness now. I require the constant anodyne of work."

The affliction had been swiftly followed by another which added to the sorrows of a singularly affectionate nature. Two months after Mrs. Harcourt's death Sir George Cornewall Lewis, her step-father, died at Harpton, and Harcourt, writing from thence to his mother, said: "To me the loss is irreparable. He was a second father, my guide, philosopher and friend. Another sheet-anchor of my life is severed, and I am more than ever adrift." It was no idle figure of speech. There are few more stainless figures in the records of English public life than that of George Cornewall Lewis.[1]

[1] The son of T. F. Lewis of Harpton Court, Radnorshire, he had a distinguished career at Oxford, went to the Bar in 1831, began public work in 1833 as a Commissioner to inquire into the condition of the poor Irish residents in the United Kingdom, wrote many important books on history and philology—among them an *Essay on the Origins and Formation of the Romance Languages*, *Enquiry into the Credibility of the Early Roman History*, attacking the Niebuhr theory of epic lays, etc., *Essay on the Government of Dependencies*, *Treatise on the Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics*, etc.—sat in Parliament for Herefordshire in 1847 and for Radnor

All his contemporaries, whether political friends or foes, bear witness to the beauty of his character, and the range of his intellect. He was distinguished, said Lord Aberdeen, for "candour, moderation and the love of truth," and in his speech on the motion for the adjournment of the House on the occasion of his death, Disraeli said of him :

> Although he was a man most remarkably free from prejudice and passion, that exemption from sentiments which are supposed in general to be necessary to the possession of active power had not upon him that effect which they generally exercise, and he was a man who, in all the transactions of life, brought a great organizing faculty and a great power of sustained perseverance to the transaction of public affairs. . . .

But the best picture of this remarkable man appears in that rich mine of memories, Greville's Diary. Under date February 8, 1857, Greville says :

> Gladstone seems bent on leading Sir George Lewis (Lewis was the Chancellor of the Exchequer at that time) a weary life, but Lewis is just the man to encounter and baffle such an opponent, for he is cold-blooded as a fish, totally devoid of sensibility or nervousness, of an imperturbable temper, calm and resolute, laborious and indefatigable, and exceedingly popular with the House of Commons, from his general good humour and civility, and the credit given him for honour, sincerity, plain dealing, and good intentions.

The saying attributed to him that "life would be tolerable but for its amusements" illustrates both his humour and his gravity. Harcourt was always attracted by the qualities of character and intellect, and in falling in love with Thérèse Lister he fell under the moral and political influence of her step-father. The contact with Cornewall Lewis shaped his conception of Liberalism, and corrected his judgment. He sat with that humility which mingled so curiously with a rather despotic temper at the feet of his step-father, and sought his counsel on all public and professional questions. Roundell Palmer (afterwards Earl of Selborne), whose liking for Harcourt was never more than temperate, perhaps

boroughs from 1855, and filled successively the posts of Secretary to the Board of Control (1847), Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1850), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1855), Home Secretary (1859), and Secretary for War (1861).

because of the latter's incurable Erastianism, wrote on Sir George Lewis's death :—" The death of Sir George Lewis, in the full maturity of his powers, was a public misfortune. . . . For Harcourt's weak points, no corrective could be more salutary than the guidance of such a man."

Harcourt was conscious both of his debt and his loss, and made recognition of them in a characteristic way. The son who had come into the world when the mother left it, had been christened in the name of Reginald, after Harcourt's old friend Reginald Cholmondeley, but, after Cornewall Lewis's death, he was christened again at Nuneham in the name of Lewis, Lord Clarendon acting as his godfather. In that child, the shattered affections of Harcourt centred with an intensity that continued unbroken to the end of his life, and became a legend of the social and political world. Lady St. Helier has left a touching description of Harcourt's devotion to his motherless boy in her *Memories of Fifty Years :*

How long it seems since I used to go and sit by the bedside of the dear, thin, pale-faced, delicate little boy to whom, as a great treat, I brought early strawberries. Sir William Harcourt was then living in an old-fashioned house in Stratford Place, and what time he could spare from his political and legal work was devoted to his son. No more tender or devoted nurse ever watched over her charge, and though his methods and treatment were not, perhaps, in accord with the first principles of health, one cannot scrutinize too severely the régime which nurtured and brought up Mr. Lewis Harcourt. Deep down in the heart of every child there is, I believe, an instinctive revolt against the system of spoiling which too indulgent parents are wont to carry out, and I am quite sure that that instinct was fully developed in him, for in his quiet way, he recognized that his father was wrong in acceding to his ill-regulated appetite for unwholesome luxuries. Sir William was rough, often impatient, but no one could see, as I used, the father and child together without realizing how tender and affectionate he was. Perhaps it was the memory of my affection and friendship for the little boy that spared me the treatment he used sometimes to mete out to other people, but through the many years I knew him, in all the stress, turmoil, and conflict of his political life, in all his bursts of deep indignation, his bitter attacks on his opponents, and his natural pugnacity, I never could forget the peep I had had into the heart of the other Sir William, who used to sit by the little sick boy's bedside.

When Henry Fox was told that his young son, Charles

James, was pulling his gold watch to pieces, he replied, "Well, if he wants to pull it to pieces I suppose he must," and Harcourt's idolatry of the little Loulou was of the same unregulated kind. The joy he got out of the companionship was unceasing. He bridged the gulf of years by assuming a boisterous rompishness himself and elevating Loulou to the dignity of an equal. In 1867 he had printed cards—

Mr. William Vernon Harcourt
and
Mr. Lewis Harcourt
at home.

Westcombe Lodge,
Wimbledon Common (Putney Station).

The removal from Pont Street to Wimbledon Common was in order that his boy might be in the country. Harcourt himself drove into work in a tea-cart, and Loulou used to meet him in the evening at the top of Putney Hill and be driven by his father through the horse-pond on the Common. The fiction of equal comradeship with which Harcourt delighted to play was shared by the family. "Months have passed since I saw Mr. Lewis Harcourt," writes Clarendon to Harcourt when the boy was three, "and I shall be delighted to renew my acquaintance with him. I often think of the happiness he is to you." "I am spending Christmas in London with Loulou," Harcourt writes to Julian Fane when Loulou was four. "You would have laughed to see us dine in state on Christmas Day. L. in his finest clothes and a crown at one end of the table and I in my black velvet court suit and knees and buckles at the other, drinking solemn toasts in fits of inextinguishable laughter."

III

While the incidents of his brief married life passed rapidly from happiness of an unusual completeness to a sorrow no less complete, Harcourt was making great advances in his professional and political standing. His definite journalistic career ended with the issue of the *Saturday Review* of April 2, 1859. No doubt his work at the Bar, where his practice

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was assuming considerable dimensions, made the suspension inevitable. Much as he delighted in the work—and no journalist can ever have got more pleasure out of his calling—it was impossible, even for a man of his energy of mind and gifts of industry, to pursue three careers indefinitely, and the fall of the brief Derby administration, followed by the General Election which took him to Kirkcaldy, served as a convenient occasion to close his connection with the Review that he had helped to make famous. The fall of the Government had occurred over the franchise question, which had for years past and was to be for several years to come the standing issue of domestic politics. On that issue, Harcourt had made his first appearance as a publicist in the columns of the *Morning Chronicle* while he was still an undergraduate at Cambridge ten years before, and one of the last two "leaders" that he wrote for the *Saturday Review* of April 2, 1859, was devoted, apropos of the defeat of the Government, to the same prolific theme. Disraeli, anticipating the "leap in the dark" of eight years later, had introduced "a so-called Reform Bill" of fancy franchises which, while frightening the Tories, dissatisfied the Whigs, and angered the Radicals. Harcourt wanted reform, but he was critical of all parties on the subject—most critical of Bright. Generally speaking, he was in sympathy with Lord John Russell, but he was critical of him too. In an article in the *Saturday* on the introduction of the Disraeli scheme, he said:

> If the truth must be told, there has been a great deal of bunkum, not to say of downright dishonesty, on all sides about this question of Reform. All parties in turn, and almost all politicians, have for several years past made it a practice to give vague pledges and hold out indistinct expectations on a subject on which it is obvious that they felt no very strong interest. . . . A politician who pledges himself to a Reform Bill ought, in common honesty, to have made up his mind as to the existence of certain specific evils which he proposes to remedy, and as to the method by which he expects to cure them. . . . Lord John Russell promises a Reform Bill just as he might announce another volume of the life of Mr. Fox or an historical essay on John Hampden. Lord Palmerston, too, becomes a reformer in his old age, and undertakes to reconstruct the fabric of the Constitution in the same jaunty spirit in which he undertook to revolu-

tionize the Indian Government. And now, to drown the whole, come the leaders of the Conservative Party with their charlatan cry of a Reform Bill to satisfy all parties.

The result of the General Election was the return of the Liberals with a majority of forty-eight, and when the new Parliament met the Derby Government was beaten in an amendment to the Address moved by Lord Hartington. Palmerston was called on to form a new ministry, and Gladstone and Lord John Russell rejoined him, the former as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the latter as Home Secretary.

Although Harcourt had not got his foot in Parliament, he was now a person of consideration with the Government. His marriage at this time gave him powerful connections with the Ministry, and we find him writing to Lord Clarendon protesting against the Government practice of sending special information to *The Times*, and receiving an elaborate explanation from Clarendon who pointed out that *The Times* could not be considered a Government organ, for "one leading article generally is at variance with the other and both cannot represent the opinions of the Government." It was on the eve of his marriage also that Harcourt received from Cornewall Lewis, his future father-in-law, a commission of some importance. The new Liberal Government were pledged to Reform, and although the introduction of a Bill was deferred till the following spring, the preliminary work was put in hand in the autumn. Under Lewis's instructions, Harcourt carried out an inquiry into the changes in the register which might be expected to ensue if the proposals which Lord John had in mind became law. These were the reduction of the basis of the country franchise to a £10 rental and of the borough qualification to £6. A limited scheme of redistribution was attached.

The inquiry, which was the beginning of a close connection with the Government, was carried on by Harcourt apparently in the midst of his honeymoon, for on New Year's Day, 1860, when on his way to Kirkcaldy, he writes to Cornewall Lewis from York giving the details of his investi-

gation into the effect of the proposed changes on the electorate of Scarborough. It is not necessary to pursue this inquiry at length, or to publish the extensive correspondence which passed between Harcourt and Cornewall Lewis on the subject. The discussion is interesting as showing how limited the proposed reform was. It was not expected on either side to add more than 200,000 voters to the register, and in view of what has happened since it is a curious comment on the timidities of the time that so trifling a measure of change as that contemplated should have been the subject of controversy for a generation. When the Reform Bill was introduced by Lord John Russell in the spring it aroused no enthusiasm and was withdrawn in May. But the inquiry was useful to Harcourt. It gave him that mastery of the subject of electoral reform and of registration which established his authority in regard to these questions in later years.

But perhaps the most conspicuous achievement of Harcourt at this time was the skill and energy with which he disposed of a grotesque claim which had been before the Courts and both Houses of Parliament for three generations. This was the notorious Bode case, to which reference has been made. It arose from the Anglo-French Conventions for the compensation due to British subjects whose property had been seized during the Revolutionary wars, and related to estates and salt mines in Alsace, alleged to have been assigned by the father, a German nobleman, to the claimant, his son and a British subject by birth. The Courts had given decision after decision on points of law, and Bode's claim had been considered by Committees of both Houses, but the claimant persisted. As Counsel for the Treasury before a new Select Committee of the House of Commons in 1861, Harcourt showed conclusively how shadowy were the foundations of the claim, and that the awards already given under the Convention were for losses suffered because the owners were British subjects. He proved that a great part of the romantic story which had gone to create the Bode legend had arisen thirty years after the event. The

Select Committee were unable to complete their sittings owing to the late period of the session, but the Report of the proceedings as far as they had gone was sufficient. The Baron retired to Russia and the Treasury heard no more of the claim for the present, though years later another claimant came on the scene.

In another connection Harcourt was called in to the service of the Government. The country was once more disturbed about the intentions of Napoleon III, whose action in using the cause of the liberation of Italy in order to annex Savoy and Nice had incurred the severe hostility of the Government. Harcourt was always ready to denounce Napoleon, and he had cordially supported the new Volunteer movement during his candidature at Kirkcaldy, though he was soon to base his idea of defence entirely on the "blue water" doctrine. In answer to the public alarm, Palmerston, in a letter dated December 15, 1860, made a demand on the Exchequer for ten millions sterling to be spent in the fortification of Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham, and Cork. The proposal nearly caused a complete break between Palmerston and Gladstone. The latter, speaking at Manchester on the 1862 Budget, complained that the country had forced the Government to undertake needless expenditure, and when he introduced his Budget he got some support from Disraeli who denounced "bloated armaments," and urged some agreement with France. At the suggestion of Cornewall Lewis, who was now (1861) Secretary of State for War, Harcourt wrote a pamphlet, with the motto "Hannibal peto pacem," in defence of Palmerston's fortifications. The pamphlet has disappeared, but in *The Times* of May 21, 1862, there appears a long letter signed "Historicus," in which the writer makes Disraeli's phrase about "bloated armaments" the text of a formidable attack on Disraeli's defence of the Emperor of the French. "In Italian policy," he says, "Mr. Disraeli assumes that the objects of England and France are identical. Since when, I should like to know, has the colleague of Lord Malmesbury discovered this remarkable harmony?" And then he

proceeds to quote from the speeches of Lord Derby, the leader of Disraeli's party, the severest indictments of France and the "despotic" Emperor of the French as the source of a mischievous policy in Italy and of the disquiet in Europe and in this country.

Seward

CHAPTER VII

"HISTORICUS"

Hostile feeling in England—Delane and Harcourt—A Plea for Jefferson Davis—Declaration of neutrality—The "recognition" issue—The Trent incident—A duel with Hautefeuille—Escape of the *Alabama*—Harcourt's contention on behalf of the British Government.

THE public were in no doubt as to the identity of "Historicus." Harcourt had embarked in the previous autumn on the famous series of letters which he wrote to *The Times* under that name on the grave subject that now chiefly occupied the mind of the country. In 1861 the smouldering fire that had long menaced the peace of the United States had burst into flames. The Southern States had, on the election of Lincoln to the Presidency, declared for secession from the North, had fired on the Union flag at Fort Sumter, and had plunged the country in civil war. The struggle raged for four years, and throughout that time the relations between Great Britain and the Federal Government were of the most delicate character, constantly verging on complete rupture. The causes of irritation were many, and, though history has laid the chief burden upon this country, they were not wholly one-sided. Indeed the first crisis was precipitated from Washington. Seward, the American Foreign Secretary, conceived the idea that civil strife might be averted by external strife, and that by an appeal to the common patriotism against the foreigner the nation might be reunited within itself. Hence the paper of April, 1861, entitled "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration," in which he proposed to divert

the public mind from the domestic issue by creating a quarrel with Europe at large. He proposed to demand from Spain and France explanations, "categorical and at once," of their proceedings in the West Indian Islands and Mexico, also "explanations from Great Britain and Russia," to "send agents into Canada, Mexico and Central America to rouse a vigorous continental spirit of independence in this continent against European intervention," and if satisfactory explanations were not received from Spain and France "to convene Congress and declare war against them." It was a counsel of panic, and though the wisdom of Lincoln modified the dispatch and saved the situation, it created a disastrous impression.

No such folly was needed to imperil the situation in England. The attitude of society and the Press was overwhelmingly hostile to the North in the early years of the war. It would not be just to assume from this that the intellectual and wealthy classes in England were in favour of slavery. They were not. But though the slavery issue lay at the root of the struggle, that fact was not so clear to the contemporary judgment as it is to the judgment of history. It was masked by the secession issue. The rival interests of the North and South caused both to disguise or at least to blur the real question. The South did so because they knew that their "peculiar institution" of slavery did not furnish a ground on which they could hope to win the active sympathy of nations to whom slavery was an unholy practice. The North did so because they did not enter the war with the idea of abolishing slavery, but to preserve the Union, and at the same time prevent the extension of slavery to territories outside those in which it already existed. It is true that before his election, Lincoln had made his famous declaration that no nation could continue "half slave and half free," but his own general attitude was more exactly represented by his statement that he looked for abolition to be a long process, perhaps occupying a century. He would not permit the extension of the evil, but apart from that he was concerned to avoid the disruption of

the Union rather than to secure the abolition of slavery, and it was not until his proclamation of emancipation in the darkest hour of the war that the true issue was presented clearly and unequivocally to the world.

From this time the tide turned, and popular opinion began to overwhelm the prejudices of society and the Press. The sympathies of aristocratic and governing England were with the South because the South represented their own stock and their own traditions. The colonization of the South had been carried out in the spirit of the old landed aristocracy, and like appealed to like across the Atlantic. All the hostility which a privileged and monarchical society entertained towards the Republic was directed against the industrial and democratic North whose foundations were laid by the Puritan migration of 1620. Conservative England had never reconciled itself to the Republic, and the break between the two elements in the United States seemed to offer what the contemporary *Times* called the opportunity of pricking "the bubble of the Republic." In short, it was hostility to the Union and not support of slavery that made all the powerful influences in English society take the side of the South and inspired what Cobden described as "the diabolical tone of *The Times* and the *Post*."

It was on the part which he played in this great controversy that Harcourt founded that reputation as an international lawyer which was subsequently recognized by his election as the first holder of the Whewell Chair of International Law at Cambridge. The problems that arose between England and the United States as the war proceeded called for an instructed and competent interpretation of the duties of neutral nations towards belligerent nations, and the letters of "Historicus" in *The Times* supplied this requirement with a luminous force and a wealth of learning that profoundly influenced the course of events and made them a permanent contribution to the discussion of the relations of nations in time of war. The choice of *The Times* as the medium of these famous papers was creditable alike to Harcourt and Delane. They had been personal friends since

they were neighbours in the Temple ten years before, but in the columns of the *Saturday Review* Harcourt had been a ceaseless critic of the policy of *The Times*, and on the main issue raised by the Civil War in America the two men were remote from each other. Harcourt stood throughout, not only for political, but for moral neutrality, and had no sympathy with the "diabolical tone" of *The Times*. But that great newspaper gave him the ear of the world, and, on the other hand, Delane recognized the journalistic value of so weighty a discussion and so powerful a contributor. He groaned occasionally, however, under the demands which Harcourt's voluminous pen made upon his space.

In one letter Delane tells Harcourt that he seems to be departing from the judicial spirit of his contributions; but, generally speaking, the temper of the manifestoes is calm and argumentative. His intellect was engaged in the struggle more than his feelings, and his main concern was, in the language of Francis Horner, "to reinspire a deference to solemn precedents and established rules" in the relation of nations. On the issue of the war itself he was with the North. His general view was expressed later in the letter which he wrote when the war was over and Jefferson Davis's life was in the balance. In the course of this letter (June 15, 1865), which was a plea for clemency to Davis, he said:

> I have never been able to accept the doctrine of the right of secession. I have read the great arguments of Webster and Calhoun on either side of this subject, and they appear to have exhausted the discussion. For myself I cannot doubt on which side the deliberate judgment of a lawyer and a statesman should incline. . . . The truth is that the Federal Constitution of the United States was from the commencement, a clumsy and almost cowardly compromise between two parties of antagonistic and almost irreconcileable views, one of whom desired Federal unity and the other State independence. That fundamental and original rent in the body politic of America was skinned over, but never healed. From that day to this the party of Hamilton and the party of Jefferson have represented two hostile camps, whom a series of compromises more or less sound alone kept from breaking out into open hostility. The irrepressible question of slavery at last precipitated the struggle and the issue has been

referred to the arbitrament of the sword. I do not regret the award which the ordeal of battle has delivered. I believe that a decision has been pronounced which is for the lasting benefit of the human race. . . .

They [the South] have committed, it is true, the greatest of political faults, that of attempting a revolution which could not possibly be successful. But if the error was immense, the expiation has also been terrible. By an appeal to force they have accomplished nothing but the absolute destruction of their cause and the utter ruin of its supporters. The retribution is an awful one, and might satisfy the rancour even of the most insatiable foe. If prevention be the proper end of punishment, can any one pretend that the execution of a single political victim could add anything to the terrible lesson which is read in the fall of Richmond, the ruin of Charleston, and the desolation of the homes and the lands of the South.

But though his sympathies were with the North, he preserved through the long discussion a judicial detachment from the merits of the quarrel, and aimed solely at stating the legal case as each new issue between the countries arose. His intercourse with the Government, and especially Lord John Russell, the Foreign Secretary, became so close and constant that it was assumed in the United States that he was the semi-official voice of the Ministry. Nor was the opinion wholly without foundation. Harcourt was the spokesman of English policy to the unofficial world, but he was also in no small degree the author as well as the defender of that policy. He not only justified action when it was taken, but he largely dictated the nature of the action by the force of his preliminary arguments. At each critical stage it was his robust thought and his astonishing industry in the pursuit of precedents, especially precedents provided by the jurists of the United States, that clarified the discussion and cleared the path to reasonable decisions. Read in the light of the verdict which history has passed upon events, the letters are as remarkable for their wisdom as for their learning. In no capital instance has time reversed the judgment which "Historicus" pronounced in the heat of a debate which constantly trembled on the verge of war. Sometimes that judgment served the interests of the South, sometimes the interests of the North, but always it stood

for neutrality not merely according to the letter, but according to the spirit.

In the first serious question that arose he came into conflict with the North and the friends of the North in this country. Within three weeks of the proclamation of the blockade of the Southern ports by the North, Great Britain recognized a state of belligerency, and issued a declaration of neutrality. The fact created great bitterness of feeling in the North, and led to the first suspicion of the intentions of this country. It was argued that the South were "rebels" and that to recognize them thus hastily as belligerents was an affront to the cause of the Union and an act of unfriendliness to the North. The grievance continued to rankle throughout the war, and it was endorsed as late as March, 1865, by John Bright in a speech at Manchester. But there is no escape from the dilemma with which Harcourt met the attack in the letter published in *The Times* of March 22, 1865.

The date of the proclamation of the blockade was April 19, 1861. In virtue of this proclamation, the Northern Government by the law of nations became entitled to search English merchant vessels in every part of the high seas, to divert them from their original destination, and to confiscate the vessels and their cargoes. If a state of legitimate warfare did not exist, such action on the part of the Northern Government would have been unlawful, and would have been a just cause of war on the part of England, against whom such a course would have been in such case pursued without justification. The proclamation of blockade of April 19 was therefore either a declaration of war against the South, or it was a cause of war on the part of all neutral nations against whom it should be put in force. From that dilemma there is no escape. So far as regards the position of the Northern Government as brought to the notice of the English Cabinet on May 10, 1861. Now let us see what was our situation with respect to the Southern States. The proclamation of Mr. Jefferson Davis authorizing the issue of letters of marque was dated April 17, 1861. The English Government were consequently advertised that the high seas were about to be covered by armed vessels, who under the colour of a commission claimed to exercise against neutrals the rights of warfare—i.e., claimed to stop, and to search English merchant vessels, to capture them, and to carry them into their ports for adjudication, and to condemn them in case they had on board contraband of war. Nor was this all.

If legitimate war existed, the penalties of the Foreign Enlistment Act came into operation. If no such war existed, then the ship-builders might equip, arm and despatch vessels of war equally to New York and Charleston. English subjects might enlist and take service in the forces of either party.

I would venture to ask him whether it was compatible with the duty of the English Government to leave them (the mercantile interests of Great Britain) for a single instant in doubt of their real situation in respect to the condition which had arisen in America. Was an English merchantman, sailing peaceably in pursuance of his ordinary trade, to be left in ignorance whether an armed vessel which overhauled and captured him was regarded by his own Government in the light of a pirate committing a robbery on the high seas, or whether it was a lawful belligerent exercising the recognized rights of war? What was to be the position of the English navy, who are posted in every corner of the habitable globe, to protect by their presence, and if necessary to vindicate by their arms the security of our mercantile marine? Were they or were they not to be informed whether they were "to sink, burn and destroy" as pirates or to respect as lawful belligerents the cruisers of either party who exercised against our merchantmen those acts of force which the rights of war alone could justify? . . .

The North created belligerent rights in both parties by making war on the South. The North have enjoyed their rights and we have endorsed them. They have seized our merchantmen and crippled our trade, and they have had a right to do it. If the South had not had belligerent rights it could only be because there was no war. But if there was no war then the North could have enforced no blockade, they could have seized no combatant, they could have made no prizes. English merchants might have traded as before to Charleston and Wilmington and Savannah and Mobile and New Orleans with impunity. To have seized our ships would have been to make war on England. If there had been no war Mr. Laird might have equipped for the South 500 *Alabamas* without interference. This is what the North have gained. But war is a quarrel which necessarily requires two sides. In order to exercise belligerent rights yourself you must have an antagonist, and that antagonist must have belligerent rights also. And yet it is this just and inevitable consequence of their own policy which the North seem disposed to lay at our doors, and to make a ground of complaint against us.

II

But on a much more vital question Harcourt's influence was decisively in the interests of the North. This was the question of the recognition of the Southern States. From

the outbreak of the war this had been the aim of powerful social interests, and the early successes of the South in the field lent weight to a demand which was backed by all the reactionary influences in the country and endorsed by Napoleon, who was engaged in an adventure of his own in Mexico, with unceasing vehemence. As the summer of 1862 advanced and the victories of the South seemed to foreshadow the defeat of the North, the clamour increased and opinion in the Cabinet itself became sharply divided. Outside, Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave utterance at Newcastle to his lamentable declaration that Jefferson Davis had "made a nation," and his prophecy that the success of the South was "as certain as any event yet future and contingent can be." Inside the Cabinet Harcourt's step-father-in-law, Cornewall Lewis, was fighting the battle against recognition with characteristic tenacity. He summoned his brilliant relative to his aid, and together they produced a powerful memorandum for the Cabinet against recognition. Meanwhile "Historicus" was arguing the question publicly in letters in which he ransacked history for precedents against the recognition of an insurrectionary power which had not fully established its claim to independence.

He met the advocates of recognition on their own ground and overwhelmed them by superior learning and energy of mind. They brought forward the action of the Great Powers in the Wars of Independence of Greece and Belgium and the South American Republics. Harcourt pointed out that in the first two instances the Great Powers, impelled by their conviction of the justice of the claims of these countries to independence (and possibly by other political considerations), definitely intervened by military means against the sovereign state from which these countries had revolted. These were acts of high policy "above and beyond the domain of law." The case of the South American Republics in revolt against Spain was one of true "recognition" within the understood limits of normal international law. The British Government did not dictate to Spain;

what they did was to recognize the Republics as and when they had won their independence in fact, when it was evident that Spanish control was gone.

The practical rule that emerged from the historical precedents, "Historicus" stated as follows (November 7, 1862):

> When a Sovereign State, from exhaustion or any other cause, has virtually and substantially abandoned the struggle for supremacy it has no right to complain if a foreign State treat the independence of its former subjects as *de facto* established; nor can it prolong its sovereignty by a mere paper assertion of right. When, on the other hand, the contest is not absolutely or permanently decided, a recognition of the inchoate independence of the insurgents by a foreign State is a hostile act towards the Sovereign State which the latter is entitled to resent as a breach of neutrality and friendship.

The dialectical method pursued in this great argument on which the issue of peace or war with the United States largely depended, may be illustrated by a few passages from the letter of November 7, 1862, a month after Gladstone's declaration for the South at Newcastle. He asks: What is the "South," and proceeds:

> Is "the South" which we are to recognize to include the Mississippi and New Orleans? If so, what is to become of its *de facto* independence while the Federal gunboats hold the former and General Butler the latter? Is Kentucky North or South? Which is Virginia and what of Tennessee and Alabama? "The South" at present is a cloud, apparent enough and sufficiently menacing, but still a cloud, varying in size and shape with every victory and every reverse, and never presenting the same outline for two mails together. Who, then, is to settle this question of limits? The belligerents have not yet been able to settle it by their arms. Is it we, then, who are to determine what is the "South which we are called upon to recognize"?

To the argument that the South was entitled to recognition on the grounds of the original sovereignty of the several States he replies:

> If South Carolina is and always was an independent Sovereign State, no struggle was necessary antecedently to her recognition by the European Powers. In this view of the case she might at any time, without an effort to throw off the yoke of the Federal Union, have negotiated a treaty with England. And Charleston, for instance, might have proclaimed a free trade tariff while the Government

Folly of intervention

of Washington was exacting a protective duty. The argument must go to this length or it is good for nothing at all. The truth is that from the time that the States chose, for their own interests and in order to enhance their own importance, to organize and present themselves to the world as a collective Federal Government, foreign nations have ceased to have anything to do except with that Government which, for the purpose of all foreign relations, the States themselves constituted their representative and plenipotentiary.

He turns to the demand for intervention, friendly or forcible, to put an end to "this horrible strife." Intervention is a question of policy and not of law. It is above and beyond the domain of law.

But . . . it is obviously necessary that those who are to intervene should know and be able to declare what they are prepared to enforce, or that those who offer to mediate should be in a position to state what they propose to recommend. In the cases of Belgium and of Greece the Powers of Europe knew very well what they intended to accomplish, and they effected their purpose. When Louis Napoleon intervened in Italy he had a policy which he more or less carried out. But if Europe is to intervene in America, either by mediation or otherwise, what is the view on which she proposes to act? Whatever may be thought of the original causes and motives of the American quarrel, it is obvious enough that in its final solution the question of slavery must in some form or other be dealt with. Its limits must be defined and its conditions determined. What scheme are the great Powers prepared to recommend or to enforce on the subject of slavery which "the South" would accept and which would not shock the conscience of Europe? Is Europe prepared with a substitute for Mason and Dixon's line, or has it settled a new edition of the Missouri Compromise? Yet if we are to mediate, it can only be by urging some plan which we approve. What is that solution of the negro question to which an English Government is prepared to affix the seal of English approbation? If the combatants settle the question for themselves, we can accept the result without responsibility. If the matter is to be negotiated through our mediation we must lend our moral sanction to the settlement at which we assist. There are many things which we cannot help, but there are some things with which it were wise to have nothing to do. And to this latter category I venture to think most eminently belongs the definition of that permanent line of demarcation which must, no doubt, one day separate the Slave from the Free States of America.

"I am extremely glad that you have written the letter," writes Cornewall Lewis to Harcourt apropos of this deliverance. "It will be very useful, and will teach such

shallow writers as Robert Cecil (Lord Salisbury) that there is something more than they see."

It was the practice of "Historicus" to clinch his case by appealing to the example of the United States. He used the precedents set up at Washington with extraordinary skill in all his controversies, If he was aiming at making the British Government fair to the North he showed how fair an example Washington had set, in the face of popular clamour, when we were in trouble; if his purpose was to meet some criticism from the Federal Government he produced an avalanche of precedents set up by the American jurists which sustained our action. In this way he disarmed the attack from both sides. Throughout the critical autumn of 1862, the struggle over recognition went forward. The Confederate agents, Slidell and Mason, brought every gun to bear upon the Government, and they had behind them the ceaseless activities of France. "All through the summer of 1862," says C. F. Adams in his biography of his father, the American Minister in London, "the Ministers of Napoleon III were pressing the British Government towards recognition." Napoleon told W. S. Lindsay, the Pro-South Englishman, that "he would long since have declared the inefficiency of the blockade and taken steps to put an end to it, but that he could not obtain the concurrence of the English Ministry." And the interview with Lindsay was granted, on the Emperor's own admission, in the hope that he would be a channel through which he could once more approach the British Government with a view to prompt and decisive action which was to take the shape of the despatch of a joint fleet to the mouth of the Mississippi. But Lord John Russell was indisposed to fall into the trap, and his own judgment was fortified by the firmness of Cornewall Lewis and the industrious researches and powerful dialectic of "Historicus." Cornewall Lewis's letters to Harcourt at this time show how closely the two men were working together, and Russell's notes to Harcourt indicate an increasing tendency to look to him, not only for support in public but for assistance in private. By the end of 1862,

the battle over recognition had been practically won, and in his introduction to the collected edition of the "Historicus" letters,[1] Harcourt summed up as follows:

I rejoice that the English Government have proclaimed the policy of an absolute neutrality. I most earnestly hope that, through good report and through evil report—in spite of all solicitations and every menace—they will religiously adhere to the only course which can bring credit to themselves or advantage to the country. We are told, indeed, that a policy of neutrality will bring us the hatred of both belligerents. It may be so; for, to men inflamed by passion and hatred, nothing is so odious as the spectacle of justice and fairness in others. It is said that neutrality is not popular in this country. I do not believe it; but if it were so, I hope that fact would not influence the policy of an English Administration on so critical a question. The quality by which statesmen are distinguished from the clamorous mob, and the title which they possess to govern the destinies of a people, lie in the power to look beyond the exigency of the moment, and to forecast the horoscope of the future. To be firm when the vulgar are undecided, to be calm in the midst of passion and to be brave in the presence of panic are the characteristics of those who are fit to be the rulers of men. Such men bear obloquy and put aside vituperation, because they know that the time will come when their assailants themselves will feel—though perhaps not acknowledge—the wisdom of their acts, and that, in the return of moderation and good sense, justice will be done to the equitable policy of a true and faithful neutrality.

In the year 1818, in the debates on the Foreign Enlistment Bill, Mr. Canning held up to the imitation of the English House of Commons the example of the Government of the United States at the outbreak of the Revolutionary War in Europe. I know no story in the page of history more striking or more instructive than the noble stand made by Washington and the great statesmen by whom he was surrounded, against the excited passions of his own countrymen, who sought to force the Government into hostilities with Great Britain. The narrative is told in the closing chapters of Marshall's *Life of Washington*—the worthy biography of a noble life. No spectacle so sad or so memorable has been transmitted for the instruction of posterity as that of an ungovernable people who clouded, by their ingratitude, the closing days of the patriot chief who had led them through the wilderness and brought them into the land of promise. But those were days in which American statesmen had the courage to be wise, and dared to be unpopular. In the midst of almost universal obloquy Washington stood firm,

[1] *Letters of Historicus on some Questions of International Law. Reprinted from* The Times. Macmillan & Co. 1863.

and refused to adopt the rash and short-sighted policy of a frantic people and a violent Press. He knew too well

> How nations sink, by daring schemes oppress,
> When vengeance listens to the fool's request.

I have spoken with the respect they deserve of the judicial records of American decisions. But an equal if not higher reputation belongs to the archives of American diplomatic statesmanship, at the close of the last and the beginning of the present century. The published volumes of *American States Papers* during the early years of the French Revolutionary War present a noble monument of dignity, moderation and good faith. They are repertories of statesmanlike principles and juridical knowledge. Their relation to the publications of modern transatlantic politicians is much that of the literature of Rome under Augustus to that of the Lower Empire. Pressed upon either side by the violence and menaces of the rival combatants, Washington persisted to the last in an inflexible attitude of strict neutrality. The country over whose destinies he presided reaped the lasting advantage of his wise and prudent counsels. And the verdict of an enlightened posterity has indemnified his fame for the odium which was cast upon him by an unjust and ignorant populace. I trust that the administration which may be charged with the fortunes of this Empire, to whatever party they may belong, will sustain the same superiority above the solicitations of interested partisans and the clamour of ignorant passion.

III

I have dealt at some length with the recognition issue, because it was the crucial question of the first two years of the war, and because it discloses better than any other phase of the great battle of words the central position which Harcourt took up in the varying argument. But side by side with this main stream of controversy, there were constant episodes of violence which threatened an outbreak of hostilities and in regard to which Harcourt's powerful pen was always at work to keep the discussion in the realm of law. "The jurist should know no distinction between the Trojan and the Tyrian camps," he says in one letter (January 3, 1863). "I have observed with some satisfaction that the letters which I have addressed to you have been in turn displeasing to each set of partisans who espouse opposite sides in the American quarrel." They were sufficiently displeasing to the North in the matter of the *Trent*, which

was the first incident that brought the countries to the brink of war. The American steamship *San Jacinto*, which had been cruising off the West Coast of Africa for the suppression of the slave trade, was returning home in October 1861, when Captain Wilkes, the commander, learned at Cienfuegos that the British steamer *Trent* was to leave Havana on November 7 with the Confederate envoys, Slidell and Mason, who were duly accredited to Paris and London respectively. Wilkes steamed to the Bahama Channel, sighted the *Trent* on November 8, ran up the United States flag and fired a shot across the *Trent's* course. The *Trent* showed the British colours, but did not stop until a shell was exploded across her bows. Thereupon her course was stayed, a boat's crew from the *San Jacinto* boarded her, and Mason and Slidell, with their secretaries, were forcibly removed, after which the *Trent* proceeded on her way.

A storm of unprecedented fury broke out on both sides of the Atlantic and for six weeks war seemed imminent. The North, depressed and angry with the deplorable failures of the war, hailed the feat of Wilkes as if it were a great victory, and jurists and statesmen as well as journalists and stump orators exalted Wilkes as a hero and endorsed his action as in conformity with international law. He was entertained at a banquet at Boston at which the most extravagant praise was heaped on him by the Governor of Massachusetts and the Chief Justice of the State (George T. Bigelow), who declared that "Commodore Wilkes acted more from the noble instincts of his patriotic heart than from any sentence he read from a law book," adding that in such circumstances "a man does not want to ask counsel, or to consult judges upon his duty ; his heart, his instinct, tells him what he ought to do."

This hysteria was answered by a violent tempest in England. It mobilized all the sympathies for the South around a grievance in regard to which the legal merits were clearly on the side of England. The Government issued an immediate demand for the release of the prisoners, and for two months the issue hung in the balance. During this crucial

time the pen of "Historicus" was working at high pressure on the law of the subject, and he bandied argument and precedent with the American controversialists with torrential energy. And, as usual, he scored by his appeal to American history. George Sumner, the brother of Charles who was Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations at Washington, had himself unfortunately appealed to American history. He defended in the *Boston Transcript* the seizure of Mason and Slidell on the ground that in the War of Independence the British had seized Henry Laurens, colonial envoy to Holland. Sumner's argument was based on the inaccurate statement that Laurens was on a Dutch (neutral) packet, the *Mercury*, when the seizure took place. Harcourt looked up Sumner's authority, and pointed out that the *Mercury* was not a Dutch packet, but an American belligerent. No complaint was made of the incident at the time, as would assuredly have been the case if the *Mercury* had been a neutral. Harcourt says (December 5, 1861):

> If the *San Jacinto* had taken Messrs. Slidell and Mason out of the Charleston packet when she was running the blockade under the Confederate flag, the cases would have been parallel. So far the precedent of Mr. Laurens carries the argument, but not a step farther.

Driven from the Laurens precedent, the American controversialists took new ground.

> "A mouse that is confined to one poor hole
> Can never be a mouse of any soul,"

writes "Historicus" five days later (December 10, 1861), "and, accordingly, now that the H. Laurens case has broken down, we hear of nothing but the great Lucien Bonaparte case." The new parallel brought forward by the Americans was the capture of Lucien Bonaparte by the English in 1810. Harcourt proves that this precedent is as fallacious as the Laurens case. Lucien Bonaparte was not taken, as alleged, from a neutral ship, but from an American boat chartered by Murat, a belligerent, for the express purpose of carrying Lucien Bonaparte, a belligerent, and his property. If the *Trent* had been chartered by Jefferson Davis expressly

to carry Messrs. Mason and Slidell the case might have been similar. Moreover Lucien had placed himself under Sardinian jurisdiction in Sardinian waters. Sardinia was at war with France, and virtually handed over Lucien Bonaparte to the British cruisers defending the Island, by refusing him permission to land.

Not less effective was his reply to Randolph Clay, a former American chargé d'affaires at St. Petersburg and Vienna, against whom, in regard to the arrest of belligerents on board neutral vessels on the high seas, he quoted weighty American authority in the shape of a message to Congress during the war of 1813 by President Madison. In this message it is stated that a search for, or seizure of, British persons or property on board neutral vessels on the high seas is not a belligerent right derived from the law of nations.

On the argumentative as on the historical issue, "Historicus" claimed the victory. Seward, the American Secretary of State, insisted that the men and their despatches were contraband of war. Harcourt in his reply said (January 15, 1862):

> In order to constitute contraband of war it is absolutely essential that two elements should concur—viz. a hostile quality and a hostile destination. If either of these elements is wanting there can be no such thing as contraband. Innocent goods going to a belligerent port are not contraband. Here there is a hostile destination, but no hostile quality. Hostile goods, such as munitions of war going to a neutral port, are not contraband. Here there is a hostile quality but no hostile destination. . . . The unquestioned and unquestionable neutral destination of the *Trent* proves beyond all possibility of cavil that neither persons nor goods on board of her could be treated as contraband.

This, and much else in the prolific judgments of "Historicus" on the various issues raised on the war—"Blockade," "Right of Search," "Neutral Trade in Contraband of War," "Essential Qualities of Contraband" and "Belligerent Violations of Neutral Rights," read strangely in the light of the ruthless practice during the European War of 1914–18; but his argument and his precedents prevailed then. The hot fit passed in America, and on January 8, 1862 Cornewall Lewis wrote to Harcourt from the War Office:

You will, I am sure, be glad to hear that we are to have peace, and not war, with the United States. A telegram has been received this afternoon from Lord Lyons, announcing that the four prisoners (Mason, Slidell and their secretaries) are to be surrendered, and that he remains at his post.

It must be confessed that in the controversy Harcourt mixed his law with a good deal of pepper. He ragged Seward and the Sumners unmercifully, scoffed at their law and their "swagger," contrasted them unfavourably with the great Americans of the past, spoke slightingly of Lincoln, and made violent attacks on John Bright who had espoused the American case and, said Harcourt, seemed to think that "Justice and Wisdom when they left the rest of the earth took refuge in the broad beavered shades of Boston." It was always a trait of Harcourt that he was not content with beating his man. He had to roll him ignominiously in the dust. That he was unjust to Charles Sumner he came later to realize, and his opinion of Lincoln underwent a profound change which evoked perhaps the noblest tribute paid to that great man on this side of the Atlantic after his assassination. There is no doubt that the fact that the peace was kept was, apart from Lincoln himself, as much the work of Sumner on the other side of the Atlantic as of Russell, Lewis and Harcourt on this side. He was in close touch with the better mind of this country throughout, and the letters of the Duke of Argyll to Harcourt from 1863 onwards are full of the most intimate revelations of Sumner's private views. Sumner's own letters from Cobden, Bright, Gladstone and Argyll were, at Lincoln's request, always read to the Cabinet and formed a chief source of light as to the trend of thought in England. It was Sumner's word that convinced Lincoln that Mason and Slidell must be given up and reconciled the public to that step. This was the first, but not the last great service he performed in helping to keep the peace between the two countries.

But the most sustained and powerful argument which "Historicus" conducted was not against the American statesmen and jurists, but against a French international lawyer, M. Hautefeuille. It covered almost the whole

ground of controversy in regard to neutrals and belligerents, and by its clarity, force and learning, it remains one of the weightiest contributions to the discussion of international law extant. M. Hautefeuille was a very voluble, but not very formidable opponent. His object was not so much to clear up the law of the sea as to make mischief between England and the North and between England and the Continent. He frankly avowed that his deliberate object was to lay the foundation of an European confederation against the maritime interests of Great Britain. The scheme was developed in a passage which began in the following amiable terms : [1]

Des faits qui précèdent il résulte que faute d'un équilibre maritime toutes les nations sont à la merci d'un peuple qui a toujours usé et use encore de sa prépondérance pour les opprimer and pour anéantir leur commerce et leur navigation. Un pareil état de choses est-il donc sans rémède ? N'existe-il aucun moyen pour le monde opprimé, de mettre un frein à de si graves abus ? . . .

To the assertion of M. Hautefeuille that France was historically the protector of the small nations and that England was the universal oppressor of the sea, " Historicus " replied with a torrent of facts dealing with the French record at sea from the days of Louis XIV to the Berlin Decrees of Napoleon, and, having stripped every rag from his unhappy victim, exclaimed :

It is time that this line of argument should be put a stop to, if not for fairness' sake at least for shame. If England has erred, the last Power in Europe who is entitled to fling a stone at us is that of which M. Hautefeuille is a citizen. We may be no better than our neighbours, but we have never been so bad as France. The black deeds with which a criminal ambition has scarred the face of Europe from the days of Louis XIV to those of the First Napoleon—from the smoking villages of the Palatinate to the dark ditch of Vincennes —find no parallel in the annals of Great Britain. If France has repented of these acts, and has abjured the spirit which gave birth to them, it is well and I should be the last to desire to revive their memory. If France desires to appear in a new character—as just in peace and moderate in war—I shall be happy to hail the Magdalen in her new capacity. But I demur at the outset to the light in which M. Hautefeuille presents her—of the Pharisee of Europe, who thanks God that she is not as other nations are, nor even as the English publican.

[1] *Letters of Historicus*, p. 55.

Having routed him in the field of history, "Historicus" pursued M. Hautefeuille into the field of law, first on the subject of blockade, next on the subject of neutral trade in contraband of war, convicting the Frenchman of invincible ignorance or deliberate suppression of the authorities, and hurling at him the judgments and declarations of Grotius, Vattel, Stowell, Bynkershoeck, Lampredi, Ortolan, Jefferson, Story, Martens, Kluber, and "the greatest jurist this age has produced," the American Chancellor Kent. In maintaining against Hautefeuille and Dr. Phillimore the right of neutrals to sell contraband of war to belligerents—a right without which, by the way, neither France nor England would have survived the European War of 1914–18, for its denial would have cut off the American supplies—"Historicus" said :[1]

If the doctrine against which I am contending were to be established, and the duty of neutral Governments to prohibit the domestic trade in contraband by their subjects were once to be admitted, it is easy to perceive the monstrous and intolerable consequences that would ensue. Instantly upon the declaration of war between two belligerents, not only the traffic by sea of all the rest of the neutral Powers of the world would be exposed to the inconveniences of which they are already impatient, but the whole inland trade of every nation of the earth, which has hitherto been free, would be cast into the fetters. The neutral Government, being on this assumption held responsible to the belligerent for the trade of its subjects within its own territory, must establish in every counting-house a sort of belligerent excise. It must have an official spy behind every counter, in order that no contract may be concluded for which either belligerent may call it to account, and in respect of which it may possibly find itself involved in war. This newfangled and, forsooth, Liberal doctrine would introduce the irksome claims of belligerent rights into the bosom of neutral soil, from which they have been hitherto absolutely excluded, and in which they ought to have nothing to do. It would give to the belligerent State a right of interference in every act of neutral domestic commerce, till at last the burden would be so enormous that neutrality itself would become more intolerable than war, and the result of this assumed reform, professing to be founded on "the principles of eternal justice," would be nothing less than universal and interminable hostilities.

In reference to this letter Clarendon wrote to Cornewall Lewis :

[1] *Letters of Historicus*, p. 134.

THE GROVE, *December* 23, 1862.—How clearly and completely W. Harcourt has brought out the case of the Neutrals and their commercial rights with belligerents. . . . Historicus deals so deferentially with American authorities Kent, Story, Wheaton and Peirce, that if I was in John Russell's place I would send the letter to Lyons and tell him to have it privately printed and circulated at N. York by the Consul.

IV

But meanwhile a much more dangerous subject—by far the gravest of the war—engaged Harcourt's pen. It was the launching of the *Alabama* from Laird's shipyard at Liverpool. There was never any real doubt as to the purpose and destination of this famous vessel. Adams, the U.S. Minister, in London, gave the Foreign Office the completest evidence that it was ordered by the Confederate Government and intended for their use. At the eleventh hour Russell decided to detain her, but a singular accident defeated his intention. New evidence on which Russell proposed to act was submitted to Sir John Harding, the Queen's Advocate. What followed is told in the *Life of Charles Francis Adams* by his son:

He (Sir John) just then broke down from nervous tension and thereafter became hopelessly insane. His wife, anxious to conceal from the world knowledge of her husband's condition, allowed the package to lie undisturbed on his desk for three days—days which entailed the destruction of the American merchant marine, and it was on the first of these days, Saturday, July 26, 1862, that Captain Bullock (the Confederate Agent who had ordered the ship) "received information from a private but most reliable source that it would not be safe to leave the ship at Liverpool another forty-eight hours!" On the following Monday accordingly the *Alabama*, alias the "290," alias the *Enrica*, was taken out of dock and under pretence of making an additional trial trip steamed, dressed in flags, down the Mersey, with a small party of guests on board. It is needless to say she did not return. The party of guests was brought back on a tug, and the *Enrica*, now fully manned, was on the 31st off the North Coast of Ireland, headed seawards in heavy weather.

It was the most disastrous blow struck at the cause of the North from any external source. The American mercantile marine was destroyed by a ship built in a British yard, and manned by British seamen whose achievements were openly applauded in the English Press and by English passengers, who hailed it with cheers as they passed it at sea. Even

the patience and wisdom of Lincoln could not have prevented so flagrant a breach of neutrality issuing in a declaration of war if the circumstances of the moment had not been too heavy to admit of action, and for ten years the incident was destined to cloud the sky of Anglo-American relations. There was no doubt of the culpability of the British Government in the matter and Russell, who throughout the war was genuinely anxious to play fair and keep the peace, was distressed at having been outwitted by the Confederate agents and afterwards frankly admitted that he was to blame. He was badly served by the legal advisers of the Crown, and it is noticeable that from this time forward his habit of consulting Harcourt on legal problems and the drafting of documents became more marked. Harcourt made no concealment of his opinion that the Government were in the wrong. It may seem perplexing that while he was, on the one hand, defending the right of neutral trading with belligerents, he was, on the other hand, insisting that the launching of the *Alabama* was an illegal act. If the belligerents could buy guns from a neutral, why could they not charter a warship? The answer was that international law, confirmed by all the highest authorities, permitted neutral trading, but that the Foreign Enlistment Act of this country forbade the "fitting out, equipping and arming of vessels for warlike purposes" in foreign quarrels. International law did not forbid it, but our own municipal enactment did. In allowing the equipping and manning of the *Alabama* we had, therefore, offended not against the law of nations, but against a law which Canning had passed for our own protection, and, although the North had no legal case against us on the ground of international law, it had an overwhelming moral case against us on the ground that we had sanctioned a grave breach of our own law to the serious and almost irreparable hurt of the North. When the mischief was done "Historicus" argued forcibly against the *Alabama* and the *Florida* being allowed the hospitality of British ports (the former had been admitted to Saldanha Bay) on the ground that they had been equipped in violation of the rules of a neutral state.

But while on the broad question, Harcourt took the side of the North, he disclaimed any responsibility on the part of this country over the acts of the *Alabama* beyond the limits of territorial waters. It was an offence against this country in those waters: it was not an offence against international law outside those waters:

> If policy and interest did not forbid, the neutral State would be at liberty to permit enlistment or equipment to either party so long as it acts impartially to both. But the forbidding a thing which the neutral is at liberty, if he chooses to permit, cannot confer on the belligerent any larger right than that which he originally possessed. All that he can strictly claim is, that what is permitted to one shall be conceded to the other.

His conclusion, therefore, was that "this 'tall talk' of claims of compensation against Great Britain for prizes taken by the *Alabama* is mere nonsense, which has no colour or foundation either in reason, history or law." On the strict law of the matter it may be that Harcourt was right, but he was to discover as the years went on that a grave wrong was not to be airily dismissed by what was in spirit if not in fact a legal quibble.

But on the main issue raised by the *Alabama* he prevailed. Slidell, the Confederate envoy, having succeeded once, tried to repeat the success on a more ambitious scale. He commissioned armoured vessels, both at Laird's and in France, nominally for non-belligerent powers. Harcourt not only denounced in public the Confederate attempts to violate English municipal law, but brought his private influence to bear on the Foreign Secretary during his stay with him in Scotland in the August of 1863. There is no doubt that Russell himself did not wish to be caught napping a second time, but that the danger point was not past is clear from a letter from Lord Clarendon to his sister Lady Theresa Lewis, the mother of the late Mrs. Harcourt, on September 13, 1863:

Lord Clarendon to Lady Theresa Lewis.

> There is a great deal of truth in your remarks about "Historicus," whose style moreover discloses the cloven foot of the old *Saturday*

Reviewer, but at the same time I must say that the question of these ships of war is so beset with difficulties and is so likely to become a more or less fair *casus belli* against us on the part of the United States, that many people, while still adhering to the standpoint of strict neutrality, now incline to the view of "Historicus," i.e. of not allowing ships of war to depart from an English port which are manifestly intended for the Confederates. . . . The whole thing, however, resolves itself into a question of expediency, and there is as much to be said on one side as the other whenever that is the case. I may mention, however, that Layard, whom I had a talk with on my way through London and who had just seen Roundell Palmer (the Attorney-General), told me he had written to Lord John to advise much the same course as W. Harcourt dictates.

At this time Russell had issued an order detaining the Laird Rams and a month later they were seized by the Government. "Historicus" celebrated the victory in a letter of prodigious length in which he disclosed the documents that showed that these so-called Egyptian ships were commissioned for the Southern States.

It was in the midst of his domestic afflictions that the first of the two collected volumes of the *Letters of Historicus* appeared in book form. One of the latest of Cornewall Lewis's letters to Harcourt (February 20, 1863) announced the receipt of copies of the book, together with the following list of the persons to whom he had sent them: Lord Clarendon, Sir E. Head, Robert Lowe, the Lord Chancellor, Lord John Russell, Dr. Ferguson and the Attorney-General (Sir Roundell Palmer). Lewis himself had taken the deepest interest in the letters as they had appeared, and his notes to Harcourt were full of suggestion, criticism and comment on their effect on his colleagues and intimates in the Government. Lord Wensleydale "is satisfied with your argument" though "his political tendencies would draw him the other way"; "I shall be surprised if the Lord Chancellor does not concur unless he goes the other way out of jealousy"; "I enclose a letter from Clarendon, in which you will see his opinion of 'Historicus' on the trade and contraband in war," and so on. Harcourt, in sending a copy of the volume to the Duke of Argyll, said, referring to the crucial point of "obligation" in the matter of the *Alabama*:

Harcourt to the Duke of Argyll.

You will find in the letter on "Belligerent Violations of Neutral Rights," p. 149, the question which we discussed at Cliveden examined at length and the reasons which lead me to think that the Foreign Enlistment Act is not a Statute "in furtherance of an international obligation." This was a point on which I myself was for a long time in considerable doubt and argued myself into conviction by the process stated in this letter. I thought the matter so important and so difficult that I would not print it till I had taken the opinion of Sir Cornewall Lewis, Lowe and Sir E. Head, who all concurred. You will see that the Solicitor-General in his speech on the *Alabama* adopted the same view.

Among the congratulations and thanks which Harcourt received on the publication of the collected letters were several from members of the Government, including Lord John Russell and the Attorney-General, and one which doubtless gave him special satisfaction from R. H. Dana, junior, of Boston, in which the distinguished American lawyer said:

The Government and people of the United States owe you a debt of gratitude for your convincing and fearless exposition of many principles of international law which have borne in our favour in this our life and death struggle. We know your purpose has not been to aid one side or the other, but, with a judicial mind, to quiet excitement, clear the atmosphere, and correct the public mind; but this course so ably pursued, has been of incalculable benefit to us, and I assure you, is appreciated.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LAWYER

First Brief at the Parliamentary Bar—Railway Development—Defence of Public Interest against the Crown on the Embankment Controversy—The Crawley Court Martial—Autumn Shooting with Millais—The *Alabama* again—Eulogy of President Lincoln—Consultations with Lord Russell—The Reform Bills of 1866–67—Disraeli's Coup—Assistance to Lord Stanley on American Controversy.

IT is time to turn to another phase of Harcourt's many-sided activities. The argument he carried on with so much energy and success during the Civil War was incidental to his profession, but not associated with it. In that profession he had by this time established himself securely. After some preliminary practice on the Home Circuit and at the Law Courts he had gone to the Parliamentary Bar, where he became a leading expert on railway matters, this being a period of great railway expansion. Indeed the first brief preserved among his papers relates to a railway case :

Bathgate and Monkland Railways. . . . Messrs. Dean and Rogers present their compliments to Mr. Harcourt and beg to inform him that in accordance with their interview with him after the rising of the Committee this afternoon, the Consultation with Counsel is fixed for to-morrow morning at a ¼ to 10 o'clock at Mr. Serjt. Wrangham's Chambers, 12, Gt. George St.

23 Fludyer St., Westminster, S.W.,
8th June, 1857.

The brief was delivered at breakfast time and very little opportunity was left for its study before the hour fixed for

the consultation. Harcourt appeared punctually, suggested a settlement, and so gained time to read his brief.

In a letter to the late Lord Harcourt, the 1st Lord Brassey gives a glimpse of Harcourt in those early days at the parliamentary bar :

I vividly remember the first occasion when I saw him. In 1860 I was a pupil in the chambers of John Buller, the leading parliamentary draughtsman of his day. There was a continual *va et vient* between Buller and his clients in the parliamentary Committee Rooms, as the need arose for amendments or new clauses. Whenever the news came that a distinguished advocate was about to address a Committee, John Buller's chief clerk would rush into the pupil-room and send us off to study eloquence, as displayed by the leaders of the parliamentary bar. It was in the corridor leading to the Committee Rooms that I first saw your father, then in the prime of early manhood. He was pacing leisurely to and from, in consultation with his leader, Hope-Scott. Clients, witnesses, and lookers-on, more or less interested, formed a busy throng. In stature and dignity of bearing your father and Hope-Scott were conspicuous in the crowd. For the successful men incomes were large in those palmy days of private bill legislation. When your father left the Bar to enter Parliament he made a sacrifice which did him honour.

A gay episode of his career at the parliamentary bar is recorded by Lord Shaw of Dunfermline in his *Letters to Isabel* (Cassell, 1921). It was told to Lord Shaw (then Mr. Thomas Shaw) during a dull debate in the House at a time when Harcourt was leader of the Opposition. Mr. Shaw had asked Harcourt to tell him something of his life at the Parliamentary Bar :

He gave that gurgling chuckle of his which shook his heavy frame, and then he said :

" I was once, about the beginning, taken in as third counsel. My seniors were Mr. Hope-Scott and Mr. Pope. We were for Lord —— and we were to oppose an Irish railway scheme. So we had a conference, and Lord —— came to it. Said Hope-Scott, ' Would your Lordship tell us in a word what your case is ? ' ' My case,' said his Lordship, ' is that the directors are all damned scoundrels.' ' Any more ? ' said Scott. ' No,' said Lord ——, ' that's enough, isn't it ? That is my case.' " We both laughed, and I said, " Very definite."

Then he resumed : " The very thing I said at the blessed conference. I struck in, ' Your instructions, Lord ——, are very clear. You wish the case run on those lines.' ' I do,' said his Lordship.

"So we all agreed there was no more to be said. And when the Bill came on, of course, Hope-Scott and Pope were not there."

"What happened?" said I.

"Oh," he said, "I ran the case according to instructions. I cross-examined the first director. It rather appeared, after all, there was something in Lord ——'s idea. When the cross-examination finished, my clerk pulled my gown, and said to me: 'Lord —— has given instructions to double your brief fee.'

"Then came on another director. At the close of his evidence my clerk again pulled my gown and said: 'Lord —— has given instructions to treble your brief fee.' I turned to him and said, '*Any more directors?*'"

"And were there?" said I to him. "Alas, no, Shaw," said he. "They wouldn't face the music. The Bill collapsed."

What the extent of the sacrifice was to which Lord Brassey refers is not known with precision. There is a statement in Harcourt's own handwriting of earnings at the parliamentary bar in one session of 1865 as follows:

Unpaid,	Paid,
6,910 gns.	1,370 gns.

and, according to the best authority on the subject, it would appear that when he sacrificed law for politics his income was in the neighbourhood of £20,000 a year. That it was considerable is evident from the fact that, starting without a fortune of his own, he in ten years or so of professional practice secured such a position of independence that he was able for the rest of his days to devote himself to the uncertain and, in his case, highly unprofitable calling of politics.

It was always characteristic of Harcourt's legal activities that they widened out into the sphere of public affairs and not seldom into public discussion. For example, his experience in connection with railway legislation led him early to the consideration and discussion of the enhancement of land value, whether by railway building or otherwise. He did not live to see the great controversy on the subject in the decade before the European War, but the letters which he contributed to *The Times* on various occasions show that he had formed very clear ideas on the subject. In his argument with Lord Redesdale in regard to the opposition which the latter's committee was putting in the way of

railway construction, he insisted that "public advantage" governed the matter. It was not the duty of Parliament to ask whether the projected railway would pay:

> I say a line may be distinctly for the public advantage, and therefore justify the concession of compulsory powers over private property, though the contractor who constructs the line makes a bad speculation and the shareholders who invest in it make an unprofitable investment.

Harcourt was concerned to meet the prejudice of landlords and others who feared the destruction of the amenities of the countryside by the coming of the railway, the objection of existing railway companies to reasonable development which might limit their share of business, and so on. One contention put forward, apparently by Lord Redesdale, that if a railway was desirable in any district the money for its construction would be locally forthcoming, seems an odd one. Harcourt pointed out that it was desirable that farmers, traders, and manufacturers should employ their money in their own businesses, and that the objection to "foreign" capital was a revival of the old Protectionist theory.

He was under no illusion as to the class who were really profiting by the new development.

> Whatever gains or losses (he writes) have been made by railroad enterprises, there is one set of persons who have derived from them unmixed advantages, and that is the landed interest. From the owners of the barren moors in Scotland down to the proprietor of a small plot of building land near the metropolis there is not a landowner in the country whose property has not been enormously enhanced by the construction of railroads (*The Times*, June 4, 1866).

His brother, E. W. Harcourt, who succeeded to the Nuneham estate, might well complain, as he did on another occasion, "You have no landed ideas," to which Harcourt gaily retorted, "You have the land, and may leave the ideas to me."

Some of his contentions on railway development are more open to criticism in the light of later events. He thought that the expense of railway construction did not concern the

general public at all. If there was extravagance on the part of contractors that was the business of the contractors and of the shareholders, and no one else's. But sixty years ago no one who was not endowed with prophetic powers could have foreseen to what extent agriculturists and manufacturers would depend on cheap freights, still less that the purchase of the railways by the State would ever become a question of practical politics.

> Parliament (he says) will have regard alone to the general interests of the whole community, and not to that of particular individuals. And from this general and national point of view I venture boldly to assert that, so long as a railway is properly constructed and worked at fair rates, it matters not one jot to the public or to Parliament how much it cost—where the money comes from, or whether it pays any dividend. . . . (*The Times*, June 4, 1866).

It is clear that the validity of this argument depends on the definition of "fair rates," and that extravagance in the sums paid for land, excessive costs of construction, and lavish watering of capital have handicapped farmers, merchants, and traders by preventing the establishment of cheap rates.

In another case, that of the Thames Embankment, Harcourt was conspicuous in the defence of the public interest—in this case against the Crown. In 1862 he was Counsel to the Board of Trade in the controversy which arose over the rights of the holders of the property facing the river. The Crown, as represented by the Department of Woods and Forests, claimed special treatment in respect of the frontage reclaimed, and Harcourt wrote to *The Times* (July 7, 1862), under the name of "Observer," putting the case for the public very strongly. The Department demanded the insertion in the Bill of a clause which would, in Harcourt's view, create a position such that—

> The Crown, alias Mr. Gore, will obtain the whole enjoyment of the land which the public has been at the expense of reclaiming, and the public will have, in addition, to compensate the Crown's lessees, whom the Crown has expressly provided shall not be compensated by itself.

Messrs. Gore and Pennithorne, acting for the Department of Woods and Forests, had stated that they "made a distinc-

tion between the Crown and the Public." This was too much for Harcourt.

The lands of the Crown (he wrote) are just as much public property as Trafalgar Square or the House of Parliament. The notion that the Crown could or would ever abandon the Civil List, and resume the management of its own territories, is about as probable as that some one should take up the glove at the coronation and challenge the title of the Sovereign ; but, perhaps, it may be said that what is amassed by the rapacity of Mr. Gore's department on the one hand flows, on the other, into the public Treasury ; and that, therefore, if Peter is robbed, it is only in order to pay Paul. But this is not so ; unfortunately Mr. Gore has the spending as well as the extorting power. We have seen that he was ready to pay £90,000 out of the funds of his department to keep the public off the Embankment. It is certainly not the interest of the public to tolerate the grasping policy of the Woods and Forests, which, while it greedily exacts from the public claims to which it has no title, is on the other hand ready to spend with profusion the funds of which it has so possessed itself, wholly without regard to the public interests, and even, as in the case of the Thames Embankment, absolutely to the exclusion of the public rights.

The sequel to this struggle came ten years later, when Harcourt was able to give effect in Parliament to the view for which he had fought outside. The matter may be conveniently disposed of here by the following extract from *The Times* " Summary of the Session " published on August 10, 1872 :

Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Lowe reverted with characteristic tenacity of purpose to their claim on behalf of the Crown to a portion of the reclaimed land near the western end of the Thames Embankment. A Select Committee was induced to reverse the recommendation of last year, and a Bill for the settlement of the disputed question was about to be passed through the House of Commons, when Mr. Harcourt moved and passed against the Government a resolution that it was not expedient to proceed further with the matter during the present year. In this instance, whatever may be thought of the tact and judgment of Ministers, it is impossible to doubt that their opposition to the wishes of the London ratepayers and to the feelings of the House of Commons must be dictated by conscientious convictions.

I

It was in a case of an entirely different sort, however, that Harcourt came conspicuously before the general public as a

great combatant lawyer. Towards the end of 1863 the country was excited by one of those trials which periodically seize its imagination and arouse its anger. The Crawley Court Martial has long been forgotten by the public, but it still lives in the annals both of the Army and of the Law. It involved problems of military discipline and military tyranny that never fail to awaken public feeling, and it was accompanied by an element of tragedy that moved the public mind and led to a fierce outcry both in the Press and in Parliament. The case was, briefly, as follows :

Colonel Crawley had assumed command of the 6th (Enniskillen) Dragoons at Ahmednuggur early in 1861. His efforts to promote discipline in the regiment may have been severe ; they certainly aroused violent feeling in the regiment, in which a clique hostile to the Colonel was formed. Paymaster Smales, one of his chief opponents, was court-martialled at Mhow in 1862, and cashiered. While this court was pending, three non-commissioned officers were placed under arrest, by direct orders from Colonel Crawley's superiors, in connexion with Smales's case. Reports reached England that the Colonel had been guilty of gross inhumanity towards these men.

Public opinion was indeed so stirred by the stories of the treatment of the three non-commissioned officers, one of whom, Lilley, died under arrest, while a second was reported to have been a raving lunatic when released, that it was eventually agreed to institute a public inquiry at Aldershot, the witnesses being brought over from India for the purpose. Meanwhile the verdict of the Mhow court martial had been quashed on the advice of the law officers at home, though it had been approved by the Indian military authorities.

The court martial assembled at Aldershot on November 17, 1863, under the presidency of Lieut.-Gen. Sir G. A. Wetherall, Colonel James Kennard Pipon acting as officiating Judge-Advocate. The charges were limited to the case of Sergt.-Major Lilley and were, substantially, that Colonel Crawley had carried out the orders for his close arrest with unnecessary severity and that he had at the Mhow court martial tried to

shift responsibility for undue severity and for the inconvenience caused to the sergeant's wife on to the shoulders of a subordinate

The trial lasted for twenty-one days, Harcourt acting as counsel for Crawley. He was not permitted to speak, but sat beside his client prompting his questions and preparing his defence. He threw himself into the case with his accustomed energy, and as the trial proceeded the public interest grew. "Crawley is confounding the prosecution daily," wrote Delane to G. W. Dasent (November 26, 1863).[1] "Headlam tells me he will be convicted, but I don't seem to see that, and in the United Service and Junior United Service Clubs the betting is all in favour of an acquittal." The charges were entirely broken down. It was proved that the quarters in which Sergt.-Major Lilley and his wife were confined were ordinary married quarters, and that the wife preferred to stay with her husband. Great play had been made about the intrusion of the sentry on the sick woman's privacy, but this also was proved to be a myth. The defence put into Crawley's mouth by Harcourt created something of a sensation. Blackburn, the Chief Justice of Appeal in Dublin, declared that "Crawley's defence was the ablest and the most masterly and conclusive one he had ever read, and that he did not think it had been transcended by any other on record." Crawley was found "Not guilty," and after the trial Harcourt addressed the following letter to his client:

Harcourt to Colonel Crawley.

December 1, 1863.—Now that your defence is over, my duties as your Counsel are at an end. I am therefore at liberty to say now what professional etiquette would have prohibited before.

From the first time that I really understood the true nature of your case, I made up my mind that it was one in which I could take no fees.

You belong to one profession and I belong to another, both equally honourable and equally necessary to the welfare of our common country. To yours it belongs to defend us all from foreign and open enemies; to ours is attributed the not less necessary task of defending society from the more dangerous and treacherous foes of slander and falsehood.

[1] A. I. Dasent, *John Thadeus Delane*. Murray, 1908. ii. 79.

If my professional efforts have been of any service to you in helping to unravel the trammels of a great conspiracy, I desire no other satisfaction than the hope that they have been so, and I can accept no other reward.

Pray express to Mrs. Crawley my sincere admiration of the feminine devotion and the more than feminine fortitude with which she has supported you and sustained herself through the greatest trial which a woman can undergo. Alas, I know too well what it is to have the devotion of such a wife and to feel what it is to have lost it. In all your sufferings you have been spared the bitterest of all.

Harcourt was the recipient of a host of congratulations on his triumph, from people who, like Martin Tupper, had "fancied your client in the wrong" and had been converted by his speech, from others who, like Lady Minto, had throughout regarded the Colonel "as the object of a most malignant attack," and from legal colleagues. Among the latter, Thomas Hughes wrote:

Thomas Hughes to Harcourt.

Waller showed me to-day in court your letter to Crawley refusing to take fees—I cannot resist writing to thank you as a barrister and an Englishman for what you have done. It does one real good in these weary, dark days to come upon such a glimpse of a nobler and worthier way of life; all honour to the man who has shown it to us. I know well that such acts carry their own reward, but hope that you will not object to the fact being made public. I am sure from my own case that it will do great good, both in our profession and outside.

I need add nothing as to your long and trying fight—I have followed it carefully from day to day, and can honestly say I do not know the man who could have pulled the case through so well.

"You may be amused to hear that the countryside has been enthusiastic in its admiration of *Col. Crawley's* brilliant powers of speech," wrote Lady Minto. "William heard of nothing else in the hunting-field for days, and I should not wonder if the Roxburghshire farmers were to suggest him as a suitable candidate next election to the Duke of Buccleuch! You certainly have drawn your sword against the many-headed Press with extraordinary pluck, and I am glad to see the weapon as bright as ever it was." In the course of his reply to Lady Minto, written from Nuneham, where he had been spending Christmas with his parents, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Lady Minto.

January 9, 1864.—The Crawley case was one which for many reasons really interested me much and I was very lucky in being entrusted with its sole management. There is (nothing) so exasperating as to be on board a ship when you cannot command the helm yourself. It was a real good stand-up fight with the Press, and it is not often one has such good materials for giving it a thrashing. What I am most proud of is having made *The Times* cry *peccavi*. But you know an old poacher makes the best gamekeeper, and when one knows the tricks of the trade one learns exactly how and when to hit. Those who have not served a journalistic apprenticeship don't know whereabouts its fifth rib is.

I was restrained only by a prudent regard for the interests of my client from saying what I think of that biggest of moral poltroons H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief, who from sheer funk would sacrifice anyone to the newspapers. What a pity it is that people will not understand the truth of Byron's saying that "no one ever was written down by anyone but himself." I should as soon think of being afraid of the Press as I should of a bogie made out of a turnip with a candle in it. "Resist the Devil and he will flee from you." My old tutor Willes (the Judge) used to say that the true rule of life was to be found in the *non curo damnum* principle which translated in Crawleian English means "I don't care a d——." What a pity you were not born a man! You are one of the few people I know capable of acting on this sublime philosophy. . . .

In the summer of 1864 Harcourt's name was mentioned in the Press in connection with the post of Junior Counsel to the Treasury, and Sir Roundell Palmer (afterwards Lord Selborne), the Attorney-General, who had appointed Hannen to the position, wrote to Harcourt (July 20) regretting the "liberty taken with your name," adding:

I need not tell you how high an opinion I have of you, nor how much it would always rejoice me to manifest that opinion in any suitable way: and, if it did not occur to me, that an appointment, requiring special attainments in the technical parts of professional learning, would be particularly suitable to you (whom I have always thought qualified and destined for much greater things), you will not, I am sure, attribute it to any lack of friendship.

A few days later Palmer asked Harcourt to act as junior counsel on behalf of the Crown in proceedings against Rumble, a dockyard official at Sheerness, accused of helping to enlist men for the *Rappahannock*. Among his other

professional engagements at this time was one in which Lord Hartington asked him to act as the counsel before the Committee which had been appointed to decide the question of the legality of his seat in the House of Commons.

In additional to his professional work he was engaged in many semi-professional duties, such as the arrangement of the settlement made by G. F. Watts with Ellen Terry at the time of their separation in 1865. In this matter he acted for Watts, who was a fellow-member of the Cosmopolitan Club, and worked with his friend Tom Taylor, from whom there are several letters on the subject among Harcourt's papers. In his letter of thanks to Harcourt for his services, Watts says that what he pays in pocket is " the least penalty that is inflicted on me." Of Harcourt's delicacy in this episode there is touching evidence in an undated note to him from the great actress long after :

> You looked exactly the same as you looked on a certain evening in (I fancy in February) when you stood by the fireplace in a certain big studio and said a few kind words to a poor—almost *child then*—but that's long ago. . . .

It was at this period that Harcourt began those autumnal visits to Scotland which became for many years his chief source of recreation. His first sporting adventure was in 1862, when with a friend he took a moor at Suie, near Crieff, in Perthshire. The next autumn he paid a round of visits to the Duke of Argyll at Inverary, Lord John Russell at Meiklour, and the Mintos, finding, however, as we have seen from his letter to Butler, that idleness was no cure for the depression with which the bereavements of that year had afflicted him. Soon afterwards he contemplated taking the moor of Killean in Argyllshire, but the Duke of Argyll warned him that the game was not plentiful and that the rain was —87 inches in the year—and the scheme fell through, Harcourt spending the autumn holiday of 1864 in a shooting at Roehallion near Inverary, where he met Livingstone and stayed with Sir John Millais. It was the beginning of a close sporting friendship with the painter, who, with Sir John Fowler, the engineer, became his most constant

companion in the Highlands. The usual rendezvous was Fowler's house at Braemore. He was there on the eve of the election of 1868, when the house-party included Russell of *The Times*, Millais, and Landseer. There are among Harcourt's papers many letters from Millais and Fowler, but the best glimpse of these days is given in *The Life and Letters of Sir J. E. Millais*, written by his son :

August 12, 1865.—He (Sir J. Millais) and his friend Reginald Cholmondeley went off to the North—this time to Argyll, where Sir William Harcourt had taken a shooting called Dalhenna, amongst the lovely hills near Inverary. The great leader of the Liberals proved a most admirable host, and many are the good stories told of the jovial times the three friends had together. How Millais enjoyed it may be gathered from the following letters to his wife, all dated in August 1865. In the first he says :

" Harcourt and I shot twenty-three brace yesterday in a frightful sun, and enjoyed the day very much. Cholmondeley is not well (knocked up by the heat), so he didn't accompany us. H. is sending all the birds to England, and we don't like to have birds for ourselves. The cuisine is like that of a good club. His cook is here and man-servant, and the comfort is great—altogether delightful—and the grapes and peaches were thoroughly appreciated. The Duke and Duchess of Sutherland left yesterday. She looked so pretty at luncheon on Sunday. We have a great deal of laughing. To-day we are going to fish in Loch Fyne for lythe, which afford good sport ; and to-morrow we shoot again. Cholmondeley has his keeper and dogs with him. H. has a kilted keeper of his own, besides the ponies for the hill with saddlebags. We are going to visit the islands in a yacht, as the rivers are too dry for fishing salmon. . . .

" Harcourt is having a new grate put into his kitchen to soften his cook. We have come in the dog-cart here for the day, taking boat at Cladich and leaving it almost immediately in terror, from the unsafeness of the boat in heavy waves. We walked on here, and H. at once let go a storm of invective against the landlady and the waiter, both being so supremely indifferent about our custom that we had great difficulty in assuaging our appetites. After long suffering we obtained only very tough chops and herrings. . . .

" We have killed comparatively little game, but enough to make it pleasant, and I expect plenty of blackgame. Rabbits are abundant, and no one could be more kind and jolly than Harcourt. . . .

Of these Dalhenna days Millais loved to recall an amusing incident, the hero (Harcourt) being one of the three shooters, who shall be nameless. One evening during a casual stroll about the domain, the sportsman spied a magnificent " horned beast " grazing peacefully on their little hill. In the gloaming it looked like a stag of

fine proportions; and without pausing to examine it through a glass, he rushed into the house, and, seizing a rifle, advanced upon his quarry with all the stealth and cunning of an accomplished stalker. The crucial moment came at last. His finger was on the trigger, and the death of the animal a certainty, when a raucous Highland voice bellowed in his ear, "Ye're no gaen to shute the meenister's goat, are ye?"

Harcourt always gave a Roland for an Oliver, and he took his revenge for this humiliation in the next autumn. The jest is contained in the following merry exchange between the two friends:

Millais to Harcourt.

Callander, N.B., *September* 20, 1866.—Dear Harcourt,—How can I convey the bitter intelligence (after all your unsuccessful efforts) that yesterday I had my second shot at a stag at ninety yards and killed him as dead as a door-nail right through the heart? It was the most difficult and exciting stalk possible, and for the greater part of the day I was lying on my back in a torrent, whilst a deluge of rain battered my upturned countenance. Working down with our elbows the keeper and I eventually reached some rocks which concealed us, and there, after a council, I did the deed. From below we must have presented this appearance (here follows a picture of Millais and the keeper sliding down a gully on their backs and another of the triumphant shot; also a picture of a cock crowing lustily, labelled "I," and another of the stag shot).

I feel this to be rather a painful communication, but you have brought it on yourself. You needn't tear your wig, but come quietly some day to me, and I will coach you before you try your hand again upon the Monarch of the Forest. Yours sympathizingly, J. Everett Millais.

Harcourt to Millais.

Studley Royal, Ripon, *October* 3, 1866.—My dear Millais,—I received your insane letter, from which I gather you are under the impression that you have killed a stag. Poor fellow, I pity your delusion. I hope the time is now come when I can break to you the painful truth. Your wife, who (as I have always told you) alone makes it possible for you to exist, observing how the disappointment of your repeated failures was telling on your health and on your intellect, arranged with the keepers for placing in a proper position a *wooden* stag constructed like that of . . . You were conducted unsuspectingly to the spot and fired at the *dummy*. In the excitement of the moment, you were carried off by the gillie, so that you did not discern the cheat, and believed you had really slain a "hart of grease." Poor fellow, I know better, and indeed

your portrait of the stag sitting up *smiling*, with a head as big as a church door on his shoulders, tells its own tale. I give Mrs. M. great credit on this, as on all other occasions, for her management of you. I am happy to hear that the result of the pious fraud has been to restore you to equanimity and comparative sanity, and I hope by the time I see you again you may be wholly restored. . . . Pray remember me to Mrs. M. Yours ever, W. V. HARCOURT.

I see that, in order to keep up the delusion, puffs of your performance have been inserted in all the papers.

II

Meanwhile the activities of Harcourt in connection with the Civil War were assuming a new character. That struggle was drawing to a decision, the nature of which had become increasingly apparent as the campaign of Grant in the Wilderness proceeded through the summer and autumn of 1864. In the November of that year Lincoln had been re-elected President, and in the following March he had delivered the greatest and most moving utterance, perhaps, that ever issued from the lips of a statesman—the Second Inaugural. The danger of a sudden rupture between England and America had long since passed away; but the old wounds rankled, and as the end drew near the battle of words on both sides of the Atlantic grew more intense. There were two main points which embittered American feeling. With both of them the reader is familiar. They were (1) the early recognition of belligerency by England, which the North regarded as an encouragement to the South, (2) the question of compensation in regard to the destruction of American commerce by the *Alabama*. On these questions Harcourt had taken a decisive line in support of the British Government. On the first point he was clearly right; on the second he was right as a lawyer, but wrong in his estimate of the moral weight of the case for compensation. Pursuing his custom of basing his case on American precedent, he confronted his antagonists with the action of the United States during the Wars of Independence in South America and with the declarations of their own lawyers and statesmen.

But the issue was becoming so grave that he contemplated

other action. He proposed to write a letter to President Lincoln showing how honourably England had observed the spirit and letter of neutrality and how that observance had been to the advantage of the Union cause. He refers to this project in a letter to the Duke of Argyll:

Harcourt to the Duke of Argyll.

LONDON, *April* 6, 1865.—I have no reason to think that C. Sumner is right or that I am wrong. On the contrary, from what I know of the two persons I should be disposed to believe the reverse. I don't think it very probable that either he or I are likely to appreciate one another's merits, though I hope that you will tell the Duchess that some disagreeable sentences to his address were scratched out of my last letter solely from consideration for *her* feelings.

Nevertheless I should like to see what he says on the subject to which your letter refers if I may be trusted with that portion of the precious MS., as in the course of the Easter recess I am about to prepare a complete argument on the case of the *Alabama* in the form of a pamphlet in which I shall publish the said Portuguese correspondence *in extenso*. . . .

My pamphlet will be in the form, I think, of a letter to Lincoln on the neutrality of England. I have formed a very high opinion of Lincoln and mean to be very civil to him. . . .

I fear a very nasty question has arisen in the seizure of some Englishmen whom the Yankees are going to try for being engaged in equipping the *Stonewall* on the *high seas*. They are going to try them as *enemies* by a *Military Commission*, and I am not sure that they have not a right to do so.

The American proclamation ordering all persons who have been engaged in blockade running to leave the States is very foolish and spiteful just at the moment when it ceases to be of any use. They might just as well expel all episcopalians.

Writing to Harcourt on the subject of the contemplated letter to Lincoln, Lord Clarendon says:

Clarendon to Harcourt.

THE GROVE, *April* 16, 1865.—It occurs to me that in your letter to Lincoln you might lay stress upon the signal service we have rendered to the North for nearly three years by preventing the E. of the French from recognizing the South—he did not venture upon such a step singlehanded, but in conjunction with us he would have done so at any moment, and the tallest talkers among the Federals will hardly deny the importance of our refusal to associate ourselves with the pro-Confederate policy of the Emperor. Recognition by England and France two years ago would have been everything to

the Confederates. The Federals might possibly have declared war against us, and in a month they would have found themselves in the same position as the Confederates have been in with their ports blockaded and their intercourse with Europe paralysed.

As the overtures of the French Government to us have been rather in the nature of feelers and have not been made public, I think that before alluding to them it would be prudent to consult Lord Russell.

But the projected letter was not written. While Clarendon was penning his note to Harcourt, Lincoln lay dead in Washington. A fortnight later (May 2, 1865) there appeared in *The Times* the noble eulogium which "Historicus" wrote on the murdered President. One passage will serve to indicate the dignity and beauty of this tribute:

. . . Upon Mr. Lincoln himself the world, even before his death had passed a just and favourable judgment. Situated in circumstances of unexampled difficulty, he had achieved unexpected greatness. As the leader in a revolution which he had not made, he adhered as closely as that revolution permitted him to the law. In disaster he was undismayed, in success he was sober, in the presence of provocation he was moderate, in the hour of victory he was merciful. If these are not the constituents of greatness, political and moral, I know not what is the meaning of that word. . . . Mr. Lincoln grew to be what he at length became by the hard discipline of adversity and the strict school of responsibility. He became great—as such natures do become great—by the action of the ennobling duties of such a station upon a mind honest, courageous, conscientious, and truthful. Under the purifying influences of this fiery assay the ore is purged from the dross, and shines out at length in a sterling lustre which did not belong to its native state. Those who have compared his earlier with his later discourses will have marked the striking growth of his moral stature. No one, I think, can have read the Message of March 4, 1865, distinguished as it was by a tone of chastened and saddened earnestness, without feeling that it was the true language of a good and a great man, sober in the midst of political success and moderate in the hour of military triumph. The lesson to be learnt from the history of such a character is to abstain from hasty judgments upon untried men. I trust it will not be lost at this moment either at home or abroad. . . .

From the panegyric he passed to a weighty defence of the cause of the North as the cause of freedom, closing with a moving appeal for peace:

This is the moment of reconciliation—of reconciliation both at home and abroad. I earnestly trust it will not be lost. There

can be few among your readers who have been so happy as not some time or other to have stood by the death-bed of a friend. In the awful sadness of the scene old enmities are forgotten and former grudges are removed. Fortunate are the mourners who have nothing to be forgiven or to be forgotten. But there are others less happy in their grief, who after long times of alienation are reconciled and made friends at last. The grave of Mr. Lincoln seems to me to offer such an occasion of charity and of peace. He was a friend to peace and, therefore, a friend to us all. He was eminently, I believe, a friend to peace between England and America. I hope and I believe that as a nation England has been neither unjust nor unkind towards America in her trouble. The heart of the people of England has been throughout with the cause of freedom. It is a remarkable fact that the friends of the Southern cause have, I believe, never ventured to call a free open meeting in this country to support their views. To my mind that in itself is a conclusive test of the real preponderance of public opinion. The action of the English Government, for which alone the English nation can be held responsible, has been such as ought to satisfy the American people. There may have been on either side idle provocation employed by irresponsible persons which had better be forgotten and forgiven. Let them be buried in the grave of President Lincoln. . . . If, Sir, America and England walk forth from this sad chamber of death friends with one another and among themselves, then we may still pluck consolation from this dreadful disaster. Then, in the result, the death of President Lincoln will have helped to achieve the ends which he had most at heart in his honourable and useful life.

But the cloud between the two countries did not pass, and the loss of the wise and magnanimous influence of Lincoln was to be felt here as well as in America. In the storm that was working up Russell turned increasingly for help to Harcourt. He writes to him:

Russell to Harcourt.

Chesham Place, *March* 15, 1865.—I should be much obliged to you if you would look through the cases in Wheaton's Reports of prizes taken by cruisers fitted out in U.S. ports to prey on the commerce of Spain and Portugal during the War of South American Independence, with a view to see how far their enterprises resembled or exceeded in open violation of neutrality the doings of our Lairds and other speculators.

I want this that I may be ready with an answer to Seward when he makes his demand, and you shall have payment for the work if you think proper.

I have now (he writes on April 23) to answer a very groundless, though civilly worded complaint of Adams against our conduct for

the last four years, and after my answer has been before the Cabinet, I should like to show it to you. This would be about Friday next.

The next day Harcourt wrote to Russell providing him with further precedents, especially of American origin, to be put forward in defence of the British case on the questions of blockade running and the concession of belligerent rights. Russell replied (April 26) asking Harcourt's consent to sending his letter to the Attorney-General and adding:

I think the American Government will be assisted by a sound substantial answer from us, and then they will say to their own people as they did in the case of the *Trent*, "You see we cannot fly in the face of our own doctrines," or (in Castlereagh's language) "We cannot turn our backs upon ourselves."

But the disquiet in the Government about American feeling continued, and Clarendon wrote to Harcourt a few days later:

Clarendon to Harcourt.

FOREIGN OFFICE, *April* 30, 1865.—If Sumner reigns in Seward's stead I would not give much for the maintenance of peace. He writes to the Argylls that the army is *very* impatient for the payment of the *Alabama* bill, and he seems to think that the army is quite right. I shall be curious to see whether the genuine feeling manifested here *in re* Lincoln will have a good effect in America. Lyons thinks it will.

The Whitsuntide was occupied by Harcourt in more work for Russell, who had written to him "to furnish me with ammunition for a reply." Meanwhile Harcourt was engaged on his vindication of British neutrality, which, originally designed as a letter to Lincoln, was now taking the form of a memorandum. In the preparation of this document Russell took much interest, and his notes to Harcourt have frequent references to the subject. "I am much obliged to you for the different points of your memorandum," he writes to Harcourt on August 5. "I shall now finish my despatch and submit it to the Law Officers. I hope you will publish your memorandum. . . . It is a very complete argument." Ten days later he writes:

Russell to Harcourt.

PEMBROKE LODGE, *August* 15, 1865.—I have finished, with the assistance of your valuable papers, my reply to Adams, and it is now gone to Lord Palmerston, and the Law Officers. As soon as it comes back, I will send you a copy. I think your publication may appear some time next month, or early in October. I don't think public attention, either here or in America, will be awake to the importance of the question before that time. The use the American Government makes of the question is to show unfriendly tendencies, and refuse a Reciprocity Treaty.

A few days later Russell was again urging publication of "your 'Neutrality of England Vindicated,' a very good title," and complaining that his own despatch was hanging fire in the hands of the law officers. Palmer, the Attorney-General, was also delaying the publication of the memorandum, which eventually appeared under the title, *The Neutrality of England and the United States Compared*. Harcourt, writing to Russell from Dunblane on August 27, says:

Harcourt to Russell.

Many thanks for your notes and for the kind way in which you speak of my Memorandum. It is by no means up to the mark of what I should wish in a formal publication, but I think I could lick it into shape in a short time. I have received a letter from the A. G. on the subject, which I enclose to you. I confess I cannot follow the reasoning in all respects. It seems to me to go almost the length of denying the existence of actual *rights* as between nations, which I should be sorry to do. Indeed, unless there be some fixed standard to appeal to, there can be no redress except in force. Especially also in such cases as that of the *Alabama*, I think it is eminently the *interest* of a powerful maritime nation like Great Britain to maintain that there is a *duty* on the part of the neutral nations to prevent armaments within their jurisdiction. I should desire, therefore, to found the argument as a distinct admission of the duty and a proof that we have not failed in it, rather than as a traverse of the duty itself, which, it seems to me, would be for us a most mischievous contention in its future consequences. Besides, all nations, in practice, have *acted* on the admission of such a duty. . . .

"I have got your note," writes Russell from Minto on August 31, "and send you in return my despatch, which is made up in great part of the fragments of your clothes. . . . What about payment? I think you ought to accept 3,

4, or £500 for your labour." In acknowledging the despatch Harcourt wrote to Russell from Keir on September 5. After discussing "two weak points in our armour," he says:

Harcourt to Russell.

. . . I am sure that among the great services of your long political life, next after the great triumph of domestic Reform, the criticism of posterity will rank that of having conducted the fortunes of England in peace through the crisis of the American War. Perhaps posterity will know, what is a secret to-day to all but a few, how that important and happy result was due in chief to your personal influence.

I think you have very skilfully selected this moment for bringing the *Alabama* question to a head. The relations of the American Government to France make this a very favourable moment for a selection. They must give a definite reply to your despatch and they cannot afford to bring down England and France at once upon their backs. It will puzzle Seward on what pretext to hang up the question to a "more convenient season." I shall be very sorry to miss you at Minto as I counted much on seeing you there.

As to what you say anent "payment," International Law is my passion rather than my profession. What I have done was solely with a view of being of use to you and to the country. I don't like to *marchander mes amours*. But if the F.O. choose to send an *honorarium quelconque* to my clerk I shall not be too proud to accept it, and shall apply it to the publication of that which will not be otherwise remunerative.

In replying to Harcourt's criticisms, Russell makes (September 7) the following caustic comment:

As to our not preventing the *Alabama* going into our ports, it was a small fault, but I agree with you that it was a fault. Lord Westbury in that case over-ruled my opinion, and Lord Palmerston naturally agreed with him.

It was the last criticism that Russell had to make on a colleague with whom he had worked so long and had had so many disagreements. A month later Palmerston was dead, and Lord Russell was called upon to succeed him as Prime Minister, with Gladstone, still Chancellor of the Exchequer, as leader of the House of Commons, and Lord Clarendon as his successor at the Foreign Office. Harcourt's view of the new Government is indicated in a note to Lord Houghton (Monckton Milnes):

Harcourt to Houghton.

I have work now in London anent the American business, and am sleeping at the Grove (Lord Clarendon's).

Lord Clarendon is not at all dissatisfied that Johnny should be chief. I am surprised that *The Times* should have admitted the absurdity of pressing Gladstone to stand out for the Treasury. His position in the H. of C. will be so great and his succession so certain I don't see what more he could desire. I have no doubt there is to be a mild Reform Bill.

And writing to Earl Russell himself in November, he says:

Harcourt to Russell.

I have not yet had an opportunity of expressing to you with what great satisfaction I have seen the recent changes in the Government. It is impossible not to regret the loss of so experienced a statesman as Lord Palmerston, but under his lead the Liberal Party has always been in a false position, and it has now regained its natural chief. I have always thought that American affairs acted as a singularly true touchstone of English Liberalism, and by that test the true friends of the Liberal cause have recognized you as their leader. You have a first-rate Lieutenant-General in the House of Commons. . . . He has much of the afflatus of Burke. I hope he will show that he has more self-control and discretion. If he has there is clearly no man in the country who can stand in competition with him for an instant. . . .

III

With the advent to power of a Government with which he was in full sympathy, Harcourt turned aside from the American issue to the defence of the new Ministry's Reform policy. That issue had now behind it the driving force of Gladstone as well as the tenacity of Russell. The Bill was introduced by Gladstone on March 12, 1866. It was less advanced in some respects than the Bill of 1860, which had been ignominiously withdrawn in the first year of the Liberal Government's life. It proposed a rent qualification of £7 for the boroughs and £14 for the counties. Compound householders were to be on the same footing as other householders, and lodgers whose rooms were worth £10 a year were to have a vote. But this modest measure was met by a wrecking amendment—seconded by Harcourt's old friend of the Apostolic days, Lord Stanley—which provided

that the question of the franchise should be postponed until the redistribution proposals were produced. Harcourt sailed in to the attack of the wreckers, and seized the opportunity to pronounce in *The Times* a eulogium on Earl Russell.

> The last fifty years has probably witnessed the greatest moral, social, and political progress which this nation has ever achieved, and the captain of the van of the army which has compassed these victories is Lord Russell.

Harcourt had not yet advanced so far as to give more than tempered praise to Bright, who had some claims to be regarded as a champion of Reform. But he had at least got beyond the scorn of the *Saturday Review* days. In a short time he was to become one of that great man's warm admirers. He writes (*The Times*, May 8) :

> I desire to do full justice to the course which Mr. Bright has pursued with reference to this question. . . . Forgetting his words, and looking only at his acts, it must be admitted that the steady and sincere support which he has given to the Government measure, falling as it does far short of the wishes and expectations of the party with which he acts, is a proof of prudence and moderation deserving of all commendation and of imitation.

The amendment was defeated by five votes, but another amendment by Lord Dunkellin providing that a rating should be substituted for a rental qualification was carried on June 19 by eleven votes, and the Russell Government went out of office and Russell himself into retirement.

There followed that strange episode variously remembered as the " leap in the dark " and the " dishing of the Whigs." Lord Derby came into power, with Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his son, Lord Stanley, as Foreign Minister, and by a turn of the wheel, not unfamiliar in English politics, the Tory Government which had defeated the Liberal scheme of reform became itself the instrument of reform. The cause could no longer be resisted. Derby had no enthusiasm for it, as his own phrase, " a leap in the dark," indicated, but Disraeli was now the intellectual master of the party, and the idea of " stealing the Liberal clothes " while his opponents were bathing appealed to his ironic

humour as well as to his instinct of political opportunism. Harcourt, who had been approached by Disraeli with the offer of a safe seat in Wales as the price of his support, saw that what those who wanted reform could not accomplish might be won from those who did not want reform. In *The Times* of May 2, 1867, he wrote :

> No doubt the accession of a Conservative Government to office offers solid advantages, of which Reformers are right to make the best possible use. Most of the great triumphs of the Liberal cause have been extorted from Tory Governments. Catholic Emancipation was the unwilling work of the Duke of Wellington. The repeal of the Corn Laws was the tardy concession of Sir Robert Peel. The first Government of Lord Derby offered Reform as the price of its official tenure. The third Government of Lord Derby may possibly be induced to improve upon its former bid for the same object. Such a state of things, no doubt, offers exceptional facilities for passing a Bill. The natural opponents of Reform are neutralized, and to a certain extent its friends are disarmed. . . .

This time the storm raged around the compound householder. The new Bill promised household suffrage for boroughs, provided that the householder paid the rates The condition, the personal payment of rates, made " household suffrage " a farce in the industrial districts of the larger towns, where the practice was for the rates to be paid by the landlord and included in the rent, and Harcourt attacked the proposed condition vehemently.

> It is founded (he said in *The Times* of April 11) upon a distrust of the classes upon whom the suffrage is to be conferred. It says in fact to the operative class, " While the rest of the community are entitled to the franchise in their normal condition of life, you shall not enjoy it unless you prove it by some special action, by changing the existing condition of your social economy."

The Bill, he pointed out, pretended to enfranchise 700,000 householders, and incapacitated 500,000 of them. He showed from the case of Leeds how fantastically the condition would work, all the householders in the suburbs of the borough being enfranchised, while 25,000 householders within the borough would be left out. The personal payment of rates, he insisted, was as much a fancy qualification as if Disraeli had chosen to say that only persons with

red or curly hair might vote. It was true that other persons might have their hair curled or dyed to meet the conditions, but the number who did so would be small. It was a device for the disfranchisement of half a million voters.

But though his pen was in ceaseless eruption against the Government on the subject of reform, Harcourt was ready to help the new Ministry on another issue. When Lord Stanley succeeded Clarendon at the Foreign Office he proceeded to set up a Commission to inquire into the working of the neutrality laws with the object of making such incidents as the *Alabama* affair impossible in the future. Stanley and Harcourt had continued the close friendship of their Cambridge days, and there was no politician among the younger men for whom Harcourt entertained a higher regard than for Stanley. One of his earliest articles in the *Saturday Review* had been a eulogy of Stanley, whose sobriety of temper and practical wisdom he greatly esteemed. Stanley, on his side, had a high regard for Harcourt's powers, and on taking office at once asked him to continue the unofficial help he had given to the previous Government in regard to the still outstanding troubles with the United States. He also asked him to take a seat on the Neutrality Commission. "Pray join it if you can," he wrote. "No one will be of more use." Harcourt accepted the invitation. With him sat Lord Cranworth, who presided, Lord Cairns, R. J. Phillimore, Roundell Palmer, and W. E. Forster. Their deliberations extended over nearly two years, their report being issued on June 1, 1868. They suggested amendment of the Foreign Enlistment Act, making it a misdemeanour to take any part in building or equipping any ship intended to be used by any foreign power waging war against a country at peace with Great Britain, and giving the Executive power to interfere at any point. They met the American contention that illegally equipped and commissioned vessels of war had received hospitality in British ports in various parts of the world by suggesting strict examination of the status of vessels in regard to which reasonable suspicions might be entertained, and the restoration of prizes captured by ships

not properly accredited and brought into British ports. Harcourt signed the report, but added a note giving reasons for dissenting from the sections giving power to the Executive to interfere in the building of ships apart from the question of arming and equipment. He thought the exercise of powers of this kind would be injurious to the shipbuilding industry, and constituted an unnecessary interference with private enterprise. The general trend of the Report was accepted by Mr. Gladstone's Government, and was embodied in the new Foreign Enlistment Act of August 9, 1870, which repealed the Act of 1819 and made explicit and minute provisions for preventing the construction and equipment of future *Alabamas*. The duties of a neutral in this respect, as embodied in the Treaty of Washington, May 8, 1871, are virtually in the terms of this Act, but very much less precise. It will be seen later that the vagueness of the clauses inserted in the Treaty led to considerable trouble in the Geneva Arbitration, and needed an official gloss. Only Great Britain and America laid down stringent rules of this kind at that time.

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CHAPTER IX

IN PARLIAMENT

Harcourt on Himself—Disraeli as Premier—The Irish Church Controversy—The "Manchester Martyrs"—A Visit to Liverpool—Candidate for Oxford—Mr. E. W. Harcourt's displeasure—Returned for Oxford—Offer of Judge-Advocateship refused.

SINCE his adventure at Kirkcaldy, Harcourt had made no move towards a Parliamentary career. He was now in his fortieth year, and easily the most accomplished politician outside the House of Commons. The range and vigour of his activities, the tireless industry of his pen, the prestige which his illuminating researches in the sphere of international law had given him on both sides of the Atlantic, his love of battle, and his unrivalled gifts of humour made him a conspicuous figure in the public life of the time. He was a man of the future. He had not hurried his steps; but there was no need to hurry them. As one who knew him at this time, himself afterwards a distinguished statesman, remarked to the writer, there was the feeling about Harcourt that he was destined for great things whenever he chose to assert himself. He strode the stage with a challenging arrogance that neither asked nor gave quarter. He had a genius for friendship, and his friendships were lifelong. They were not confined to men of his own way of thought. On the contrary, some of his closest personal ties were with those who became his political opponents, as in the case of Chamberlain and Henry James. But in his public controversies neither tongue nor pen took counsel of caution, and he made enemies with a splendid

disregard of consequences, confident that his combative gifts would be equal to any emergency that arose. He had no illusions about himself, and a singularly clear appreciation both of his powers and his defects. In a letter which he wrote at this time to Mrs. (afterwards Lady) Ponsonby (the Mary Bulteel of other days) he gave a very candid picture of himself:

Harcourt to Mrs. Ponsonby.

I am very glad to know that I have not been as *maladroit* as I feared. You are still too gay, too intelligent, and too unchanged from what you were to want either energy, spirit, or wit. Like most women you are too absolute and too impatient of the illogicality of facts and the imperfections of men. I don't know why a difference of sex should make such a distinction as it does in the appreciation of that which is attainable and that which is not. I have come to look on human affairs as a great series of stratifications built up by slow deposits out of the wrecks of succeeding generations, just as the limestone hills are only conglomerations of the microscopic insects which have lived and died and whose little organisms have piled up these masses to the sky. The generation which is so much to us is nothing to the race. And what belongs to our lifetime is and must be a little thing, though it goes to build up a great whole.

You may call this *fatalism*, but it is not *nihilism*. You and Dizzy are greatly mistaken. It is not true I have no principles, nor is it the principles which are second-rate—though possibly the man may be. Dizzy is by no means my prophet, though I think him a profoundly interesting character, and I should like, if it were possible, to penetrate the secret of his life. Mine is a far more simple and commonplace one. I don't pretend to originality, because I don't possess it. I think I have pretty fairly and honestly gauged myself and know what I can and what I can't do. I have fair, not extraordinary, intellectual powers, rather above the average logical faculty, a power of illustration rather than of imagination, a faculty of acquiring knowledge of particular things rather than much store of knowledge itself, a passion for politics as a practical pursuit, which has been cultivated by a good deal of study (a thing nowadays rare) so that I appear less ignorant of them than ordinary politicians. A tendency to believe in general principles rather than in small expedients. A natural disposition towards vanity, wilfulness, and exaggeration, which I have tried a good deal to correct. An ambition not of an ignoble order which cares little for place or pelf but a good deal for honour. A nature not ungenerous in its impulses, but strong in its passions and its prejudices.

With all this a good deal of courage, obstinacy and determination,

not discouraged by mistakes or deterred by disparagement. Too careless of the feelings and too little respectful of the power of others. Positive, confident, I fear I must add overbearing. With a profound belief in myself. A queer jumble of good and bad. A good deal that is high, still more that is weak, not much I think that is mean. That is what nature has made me, and which I have done too little to alter. A character which may end by being a great failure but which will never be a small success. I was not made to be a philosopher or a discoverer. I should never have found out steam, but I can make a steam engine—and drive it. I am a thoroughgoing Englishman, and perhaps may one day govern Englishmen, not (as you suppose) by practising upon their weaknesses but by really sharing them. I forgot to claim for myself a certain power of discourse which in a debating country is valuable, as it seems to me, principally because it is rare.

Why do I tell you all this ? Because I want your good opinion ; because I want you to see that I don't deceive myself and don't wish to deceive others.

The long apprenticeship which Harcourt had served to politics while securing his independence in other callings was now approaching its end. Events were paving the way to a new political generation in which he could not fail to have a leading part. The death of Palmerston and the retirement of Russell and Derby had left the stage clear for the two men who were to dominate it for years to come. Disraeli's romantic career had carried him to the Premiership, to the mingled wonder, amusement, and disgust of the political world. " The old Government was the Derby, this the Hoax," said Lord Chelmsford, and the jest fairly embodies the contemporary opinion of the brief Disraeli Ministry. " The leper," as Lord Shaftesbury called him, though in office, was not in power. The disappearance of the great Whigs and the settlement of the Reform question had made way for a homogeneous Liberal party under the commanding leadership of Gladstone, and the only question was the time and the occasion which the new leader would seize to defeat the Government. In a letter to Harcourt (February 13, 1867) Clarendon had expressed the hope that " disgraceful " though the conduct of the Government is, " they will not be turned out just yet " for the following reasons :

1st, a demand for explanation and precision will break up the Tory party—an adverse vote will enable them to conceal their internal dissensions and to retreat in apparent union.

2nd, that the Liberal party is not yet in a position to furnish a strong Government and will not be so until Gladstone has had the time necessary for regaining the confidence of the House of Commons.

3rd, because, reform being the one thing needful and urgent, all hope of passing a good measure in conjunction with the Tories should not be abandoned until they themselves had shown it to be impossible. . . .

This policy of patience prevailed. The Tory Reform Bill, of which, as the Duke of Buccleuch said, the only word that remained unaltered was the first word "Whereas," was passed. Disraeli succeeded Derby as Prime Minister to the discomfiture of the Tory aristocracy, and the Liberal party was consolidated under its new leader. Then on March 6, 1868, Gladstone hurled his bolt. Significantly enough he formally opened his career as the Liberal leader by committing the party to the cause of Irish reconciliation. He declared for the disestablishment of the Irish Church, and his resolutions for giving effect to the proposal went through the House of Commons. The issue of the coming election was dictated, and the result was not in doubt. From the first Harcourt was an active supporter of the policy both on the platform and in the press. He had inherited from Cornewall Lewis a strong conviction on the subject and in his first letter on the subject to *The Times* he paid a glowing tribute to his tutor, basing his argument on a passage from Lewis's *Irish Disturbances and the Irish Church Question*, published in 1836, in which the writer said:

We confess that if there were only two alternatives in Ireland, either to maintain the Established Church on its present exclusive system, or to have all religious worship unprovided for, we should without hesitation adopt the latter, being convinced that the Irish Roman Catholics will always remain disaffected to the State, as long as the Protestant religion is made the object of its undivided favour.

In a later letter (March 30) Harcourt deals with the question of tithes and endowments, and draws a very strong distinction which he stoutly maintained, both in public and

in private, between the Church of England and the Church of Ireland.

The Church of England lives in the hearts of the English people. The Church of Ireland is condemned by the verdict of mankind, and is already dead in the conscience of the nation. It is the office of great statesmen to stand, like Aaron, between the living and the dead and to stay the plague.

He insisted on the same distinction between the two institutions when speaking at Liverpool at a breakfast given to Bright on June 4. In the course of this speech he said:

Though this is not the place to do it, I am prepared to defend the Established Church of England by arguments that are satisfactory to myself, but on no one of those arguments can I defend the Established Church of Ireland. When I am told that to touch the Established Church of Ireland is to touch religion, I ask whether religion had its origin in establishments, and whether religion will cease to exist when establishments are no more.

He spoke at a crowded meeting at St. James's Hall on April 17, when he girded at Disraeli for the famous letter dated "Maundy Thursday":

Samson (he said), when he wanted to create a conflagration, did not write a letter, but collected a number of foxes, tied firebrands to their tails, and then sent them out among the standing corn. Mr. Disraeli had acted something like Samson; only the straw was found a little damp, and the firebrands attached to the foxes' tails did not succeed in setting it in a blaze.

These activities in the Press and on the platform doubtless led to the request which Harcourt received from Gladstone that he should write a pamphlet on the Irish Church question for distribution at the coming general election. The pamphlet, a clear and forcible presentation of the case, was written and published in due course.

Nor were his activities on the issue confined to his public utterances. Sir Roundell Palmer (afterwards Lord Selbourne) had taken alarm at the new policy, and Harcourt entered into a fervid correspondence with him for the purpose of dissuading him from separating himself from the party. In one of his letters, given in Lord Selborne's *Memorials*, he said:

Harcourt to Sir Roundell Palmer.

. . . First, I understood you not to object to the action of the Liberal party in respect of the *Irish Church* as a question by itself, but that you were actuated by your view of what might be the result of such a policy (or rather of the public sentiment it might create) on the position of the English Church. Now that the Irish Establishment is doomed is a fact which cannot be doubted, and which I do not understand you even to disapprove.

But will not the fact of your treating the two as so intimately connected as to call upon you to take such a decided course go a long way to contribute towards identifying their fate ? Is not far the best solution for the English Church one in which its defenders shall say, our position rests on wholly different principles and relies on wholly distinct arguments from that of the Irish Establishment ? Yet if that be so, why should your apprehensions for the one be founded on the abolition of the other ? Surely the course you contemplate will go a long way in the eyes of the defenders of the Church, who will look to you as their champion, and in the eyes of its enemies, who will regard you as its representative, to establish the *solidarité* of the two Churches. But if their fortunes are inseparable, who can doubt what the issue will be ?

Surely this is the amputation of a diseased limb at which the most attached friend of the patient may attend as a salutary remedy. If I may be allowed to repeat myself, ought you not to " stand between the living and the dead that the plague may be stayed " ?

Secondly—which seems to me a matter most deserving your consideration—you cannot doubt Gladstone's real attachment to the English Church, both in sentiment and conviction. If anyone can dominate the spirit of the next Parliament, can " ride the whirlwind and direct the storm " on Church questions, it is he. For that object it is essential that he should have all the support both within his Cabinet and without it from those who are the friends of the Church. If you separate from him (and with your secession must necessarily ensue that of those who think with you and look to you for guidance) you will weaken the *right* and proportionately strengthen the *left* of the Liberal party ; you will drive Gladstone by the force of circumstances into the hands of the Liberationists. Are you not bound to protect him and the Church from this pressure ? Are you not called upon at least to make the *experiment* whether by the aid of the moderate section of the party matters cannot be satisfactorily concluded ? If you should find that *upon trial* you and your friends were not able to moderate the course of events, and that you were being dragged by the tide in a direction which you disapproved, then I, for one, should not utter one word in deprecation of your secession. . . .

Is it not a stronger position to take up—I don't say for yourself, but for the Church to say, " When the Irish Church has been dealt

with, if the English Church is attacked I will withdraw," than to say, " If the Irish Church falls, the English Church must follow it, and I will take no part in the one because I feel confident that their fate is inseparable. . . ."

I am going to-morrow to Nuneham to join my dear little boy. I wish you and Lady Laura would give us a few days there. Your visit gave my dear father so much pleasure, and you could do him no greater kindness than to repeat it.

II

The enthusiasm with which Harcourt flung himself into the cause of the disestablishment of the Irish Church was not the only indication of his concern about Irish affairs. It was the time of the Fenian movement, and Burke and Doran were sentenced to death in Dublin in 1867 for treason, Doran being recommended to mercy and reprieved. The case of Burke aroused intense feeling, and John Stuart Mill headed a deputation to the Prime Minister on his behalf. Harcourt, according to his habit, wrote to *The Times*. Read to-day, in the light of the ruthless policy of 1920–21, and the indifference with which the policy was regarded in England, the letter seems to belong to the moral standards of another civilization. Harcourt, recalling his plea two years before to the United States for mercy to Jefferson Davis, argued with extraordinary passion against the death penalty for political offences. He appealed from the sanctions of the law to the sanctions of conscience, quoted the language of " the great and humane statesman, Lord Cornwallis, at the atrocities of the Government of Ireland over which it was his misfortune to preside " in 1798, contrasted the contemplated severity with the attitude of France towards political offenders, and our own moderation in Canada, and asked, " Dare we expose ourselves to the belief that we were merciful in Canada because we feared America, and that we are ruthless in Ireland because there we believe cruelty to be safe ? "

England (he continued) has already enough and too much of the blood of Ireland on its hands. For three centuries, till the last fifty years, we have been doing little else but shooting and hanging

Irishmen, with what success let the history of '98 testify. For half a century we may happily say that, since the fortunate extinction of the " Protestant Ascendancy," we have adopted a more humane and generous policy. . . . It is true that we cannot boast that we have secured affection or even restored political tranquillity. But, after the treatment which Ireland has received during centuries of misrule. that can only be the work of patient kindness and persistent justice.

In the end Burke, too, was reprieved. Unfortunately, the same mercy was not shown to the three men, Allen, Larkin, and Gill, committed for murder in connection with the Fenian riots in Manchester. They were hanged in the city on November 23, 1867, and became immortalized as the " Manchester martyrs."

With the approach of the General Election, Harcourt had to look round for a suitable constituency. The first approach made to him came from Liverpool. One Liberal candidate, William Rathbone, was already in the field for that constituency and the Liberal Association were seeking a colleague for him. The name of Robert Lowe, the chief of the Adullamites, was mentioned, but his opposition to the Reform Bill was not forgotten, and attention was then directed to Harcourt. He was asked by S. G. Rathbone to go down to Liverpool and speak at a public breakfast to John Bright at the Philharmonic Hall on June 5, 1868. The speech he delivered on this occasion was remarkable for two things. The first was his tribute to John Bright, whom years before he had handled so roughly in the *Saturday Review*, but whose views on many subjects and especially the subject of reform he had now come largely to share.

They (the Tories) may say what they like (he said), but everybody knows who the real author of the Reform Bill of 1867 was. The real author of the Reform Bill was the author of the Reform Bill of 1858, and he is sitting at this table (great applause). There is a passage in one of those admirable comedies of Sheridan in which he says that certain people are like the gipsies who steal children and disfigure them to make people think they are their own (much laughter and loud cheering). Well, gentlemen, the Conservative Government have introduced Mr. Bright's Reform Bill of 1858, but you know those political gipsies have thought that nobody would take it for their bill unless they did something to it. So they put into it what we call rubbish, but which they call vital principle.

But the weightiest passage in the speech was that in which he assailed the attempt of Disraeli to involve the Crown in the Irish Church issue. Here Harcourt spoke with the authority of a great constitutional lawyer. The passage is worth quoting for permanent reference :

What are they doing for the Monarch whom they profess to respect? Are they not exposing her to that very danger from which it is the object of the British Constitution to protect her ? The theory of the English Constitution is this, that the Crown must always be in accord with the House of Commons. And how is that worked out in the English constitution ? The Crown speaks by its Ministers and by its Ministers alone. The moment the Ministers are out of accord with the House of Commons they cease to be the Ministers of the Crown, and the people who represent the opinion of the House of Commons become the mouthpiece of the Crown ; and, therefore, by the spirit of the British constitution the opinions of the Crown are the opinions of the House of Commons and of the people. That is the fundamental and the indestructible foundation of the English Monarchy, as established by the English constitution, and it is that which these constitutional ministers at this day are violating. As Lord Derby has endeavoured to set the House of Lords against the House of Commons, so Mr. Disraeli is struggling to set the Queen against the people. (Great applause, the audience rising *en masse*.) Gentlemen, I say that is the most wicked, the most dangerous and the most unconstitutional course which was ever pursued by a great party or by a public Minister in this country. (Renewed cheering.)

The speech was decisive. Next day S. G. Rathbone wrote to Harcourt at Nuneham saying that the Committee appointed to recommend candidates had met, and unanimously decided to recommend him as one of the two candidates and had called a meeting of the Council to confirm the decision next day. The ratification was unanimous, and Harcourt was asked to receive a deputation to convey the invitation to him. Immediately his name was discussed as a candidate the slander put about at the time of the Kirkcaldy election was revived. The *Liverpool Daily Post*, after referring to the fame of " Historicus," said :

A little incident in his history which jars strongly with his severe criticisms of Mr. Disraeli's changes of opinion tells unpleasantly against him. In 1857 a Mr. Vernon Harcourt was a candidate, and an unsuccessful candidate for the Kirkcaldy Burghs, against Mr.

Ferguson, who had represented the constituency for a number of years. That Mr. Vernon Harcourt was a Conservative sent down by the Carlton Club to defeat the Liberal representative. People are curious to know if the Conservative Vernon Harcourt of 1857 is the Historicus of *The Times* and the possible Liberal nominee for Liverpool.

Before leaving Liverpool Harcourt promptly replied to the accusation in a letter to the *Daily Post*, pointing out that the calumny had been refuted at the time of the Kirkcaldy election, which took place in 1859, not, as the *Post* stated, in 1857.

But in the meantime another wooer had made serious proposals to Harcourt. Speaking long afterwards at Oxford, Harcourt said that when several constituencies were open to him in 1868 he chose Oxford on the advice of John Bright. It is probable therefore that the matter was discussed at the breakfast, and that an event arranged partly to introduce Harcourt to Liverpool resulted in his going to Oxford. The possibility of his standing for Oxford had been under consideration for some days, as a letter to him from his brother Edward (May 28) shows. He was already acquainted with the senior member for the City, Cardwell, and had spent some portion of the previous autumn vacation with him at Eashing Park, Godalming. The prospect of a Harcourt standing as Liberal candidate for Oxford was very distasteful to Edward Harcourt. He was the heir to Nuneham, from whence the towers of Oxford are visible, and in politics was an old-fashioned Tory with very correct views in regard to the land and the rights of property. When he heard the distressing idea of his brother's candidature mooted he wrote to him as follows:

HASTINGS, *May* 8.—I cannot imagine anything that would give me more annoyance and pain than your standing for Oxford as a Liberal. Whatever unfriendly feeling you may entertain towards landowners, there is no doubt that the inhabitants of Oxford are very much indebted to the owners of Nuneham for allowing them so free a use of their property. Nuneham and Oxford are intimately connected with each other. . . .

I don't see at all why all the towns in Oxfordshire should be "tabooed" to you as you say—but no one could fail to see that

Oxford being, as I have said before, specially connected with Nuneham, presents special reasons why your coming forward there as a Liberal would be especially annoying to me. You say I am at liberty to oppose you. Why create a painful necessity which would not exist anywhere else ?

Harcourt's reply was evidently uncompromising, for a few days later (June 2) Edward wrote a letter in which he said :

I deeply regret the determination you have come to. It is quite on the cards that I may be standing for the County at the next election, and I cannot imagine anything much more unfortunate, and to me more painful, than that our two agents should be fighting against each other for voters in Oxford. It is all very well to say no ill feeling need be excited, but the action of agents in such matters often involves their principals as experience shows every day—and no reasoning of Lord Clarendon's will convince me to the contrary. Such a catastrophe would hardly be compensated for by the success of either of us.

Less than a week later, however, the Liverpool invitation had arrived and Edward breathed again. Perhaps his erring brother would, after all, carry his wickedness elsewhere. He would have rejoiced to know how ardently the Liverpool people were pursuing their quarry. They knew that Oxford was in the field, and despatched S. G. Rathbone to London to press their claim. He wrote to George Glyn, the Liberal Whip, a letter imploring help :

I must entreat you to use your influence to secure Mr. Harcourt as a candidate for Liverpool ; he made such an impression there by his two speeches that there is the greatest amount of enthusiasm for him, and I believe it may make the difference as to whether we carry two or only one Liberal candidate whether Mr. Harcourt stands for Liverpool or not. I need not point out the great importance of enabling us to return two Liberals under the new Reform Act for a Borough, and *the only large Borough* represented up to the present time by Conservatives ; the moral influence of such a success would be great throughout the country, and if we are to succeed you must please get us Mr. Harcourt as the candidate.

While Rathbone was dunning the Chief Whip, the Liberal agent at Liverpool was throwing out bait to the candidate with a profuse hand, promising him that he would head the poll and that the party had not been so united for

many years. But all their efforts were in vain. Whether it was John Bright's advice or his brother's opposition that turned the scale we can only guess ; but Harcourt's decision went in favour of Oxford, and we find Edward writing to him in the following minatory terms :

HASTINGS, *June* 10.—I am very sorry to find on my return here that my hopes about Liverpool are vain. I find a letter here saying " your brother is hard at work canvassing in Oxford, and his supporters are making all the use they can of your family and name. . . ." You have preferred political partisans and their very prejudiced advice to the maintenance of family affections, which once severely lacerated are not easily healed. Every one is free, and it is most right they should hold and enunciate their conscientious thoughts and opinions. There is scope enough in England for all. In your case it might have been done without administering a heavy blow to one who does not deserve it.

Edward had many excellent qualities, but a sense of humour was not among them. Harcourt, in announcing his decision to the Liverpool Association, said he had yielded to what seemed the superior claim, and Rathbone, in return, expressed regret that " we had not thought of you before you were committed to Oxford." Harcourt and his fellow-candidate, Cardwell, who were opposed by Dr. Deane, held their first important meeting in the Town Hall of Oxford on June 12, Goldwin Smith supporting his old colleague of the *Saturday Review* in a cordial speech. Harcourt began by reciting the history of the Reform Bills of 1866 and 1867, and by telling how the Reform Bill of the Tory Government had been remodelled in Parliament so that it came very near to the model of Bright. He discussed the Disraeli remedy for the " evils of afflicted centuries " in Ireland, a Catholic University, and made an earnest plea for Gladstone's policy of Irish Disestablishment. Speaking of the Church of England, he declared himself once more her devoted son, and paid an eloquent tribute to his father and grandfather, both of them well known in Oxford. He said :

All that I know of good, all that I have learnt of what is wise, has come to me from a father who was a minister of the Established Church, and who, by the faithfulness of his service, the purity of

his life, and the beauty of his character, commands not only the affections of a son, but the devoted admiration of a man.

He went on to say that he did not regard the establishment and endowments of the Church of England as the foundations of her power, though he thought they were not unfavourably regarded by the majority of the people, but as a political arrangement, and ended by putting before the meeting the essential difference between Gladstone and Disraeli as the directing power in the State:

I said to a Tory friend the other day, "You support Mr. Disraeli, but he does not believe in your principles"; and my friend replied, "Oh yes, we know he does not belong to our eleven, but we have him down as a professional bowler." This is Dr. Deane's side and the side of his friends the Constitutionalists. But the Liberals have also a side, and we contend for the principles of liberty, justice and equality. And we have a leader too, a leader who is not a professional bowler, but one of our own eleven, a man who believes in his principles, and who is condemned because he is so much in earnest.

Harcourt never did things by halves, and he was as industrious in canvassing the electors as he had been in ferreting out precedents in the Civil War. In a speech on August 31, he said he had visited 5,000 Oxford homes in pursuit of voters. He mentioned that his opponents made two serious objections to him:

In the first place, they make merry about my large size which I can't help, and in the second place they say I am exceedingly bad tempered, which is my fault, and I must try to mend it. (Laughter.) They say the same thing of Mr. Gladstone, and the disciple cannot expect to fare better than the master.

The pursuit of his own candidature did not monopolize his political energies during the autumn. He spoke in London in support of the Liberal candidates for the City, and on October 4 addressed a Working Men's meeting at the Social Science Congress at Birmingham. In the latter speech, dealing with the danger of unnecessary and superfluous armaments for "self-defence," he said:

It seems to me that this question of war, this question of armaments, this question of preparation for war, is eminently a working man's question. I cannot forget, and the world will not soon forget,

the part the working man of England played not many years ago when we were trembling upon the brink of a war with the United States of America. It is my firm belief that had it not been for the distinctly pronounced opinion of the working classes, we should have been much nearer the great catastrophe of a war with the United States than we were.

This speech was construed into an attack on education, and Harcourt wrote to *The Times* to repudiate the construction, while insisting that " there have been far more wars of state policy than of popular passion. Governments have made war, not from ignorance, but from false ideas of policy, the result of a perverse education."

The hundreds of thousands of lives (he said) which were lavished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in order to sustain " the balance of power " were expended in the pursuit of a complex idea, which belonged essentially to educated minds. I did not want to flatter the uneducated who had not made war, but to condemn the educated who had made them. . . . Louis XIV and Napoleon looked at war from a different point of view from that in which it was regarded by the peasants of France and the natives of the Palatinate. . . . There is a song which says :

" We should have peace at home,
And all things would go right,
If those who made the quarrels
Were the only ones to fight."

. . . The whole theory of popular government rests, I imagine, on the belief that large bodies of men (of whom, of course, the mass are imperfectly educated) do, from a personal apprehension of what is for the individual interest of each, come to a wiser and safer conclusion as to what is for the benefit of all than is likely to be reached by the most highly educated and enlightened rulers on their behalf. The subjects of conscription are necessarily far more sensible of the mischief of war than those who conscribe them. . . . Government by the people is, on the whole, wiser than government for the people. These are the reasons why I venture to entertain a confident hope that the more popular the basis of government is made the greater will be the disposition to pursue a policy of peace —not because the governing power will better understand the evils of war, but because it will feel them more. . . . This doctrine may be right or wrong, but I hope that it is, at all events, not inconsistent with the creed of " an advanced Liberal."

The election took place in November. It was destined to be the last election at the hustings, and on the day of nomina-

tion at Oxford there was a lively debate between the candidates before the electors in the Town Hall yard. Harcourt had the good fortune to follow Dr. Deane, and he made great havoc of his speech. When at the close of the speeches the Mayor called for a show of hands, it was clear that Cardwell and Harcourt were in an overwhelming majority. A poll was demanded, and took place the following day, the result being :

Cardwell	2,765
Harcourt	2,636
Deane	1,225

The costs of the election were returned as follows :

Cardwell	£1,220
Harcourt	£1,017
Deane	£1,341

In the country at large Gladstone had a sweeping triumph, in spite of the fact that he himself was defeated in South West Lancashire, being returned, however, for Greenwich. It was the first Parliament elected after the Reform Bill, and it exhibited a profound change in the social tone of the House. The supremacy of the governing families had gone, and there appeared a group of new men, mostly Liberals, who were marked out for future distinction, among them, in addition to Harcourt, being Henry Campbell (Bannerman), Wilfrid Lawson, A. J. Mundella, Charles Dilke and Henry James. Among these men Harcourt had, of course, the most established reputation, and it was assumed that, though he was new to Parliament, he would have office. Writing to him on the eve of the election Spencer Butler said :

I tell, and have told every one for some time past, that you will be Solicitor-General, and all agree it will be a good appointment. So I shall see your Cambridge dream of sitting as Lord Chief Justice come true.

Replying to Butler after the election Harcourt wrote :

Bournemouth, 1868.—Many thanks for your kind letter of congratulation. I never forget how you stood by me at the Kirkcaldy hustings. On the whole I dare say it is better that the event was postponed for ten years, as the pear is riper.

The majority is a slashing one. It is provoking that the Lancashire places should have gone so wrong. I take it to mean nothing else but hatred of the Irish, who like the niggers are most hated where they are best known. You will probably see this idea expounded in a letter to *The Times* by " one who knows Lancashire." Gladstone has four by honours and all the cards, and if he does not win a treble off his hand, it is no one's fault but his own.

As to S.-G. (Solicitor-General), I don't see how Collier is to be disposed of. If he were out of the way, I suppose I should stand next. However, I should not regret having a little heedless rhetoric below the gangway before I go into the dull harness of office. To go there at once would be like marrying at sixteen.

I think the Parliament, on the whole, satisfactory. I fear its Liberalisms will be somewhat too Conservative for the desires of the country—and I see too few active and go-ahead names amongst the new members and God knows they were scant enough amongst the old. If the Liberal Party stick in the mud as in Pam's time they will go to smash, and the Tories will come back.

Harcourt's expectation that Collier could not be set aside was justified, but Gladstone offered him the position of Judge-Advocate-General. This he declined on the " *sole* ground that I could not with the necessary regard for that private independence which is the first essential for a politician detach myself from my profession in an office which would not only deprive me of all present practice but also shut me out from all those future prospects of promotion in the law to which you were good enough to allude." But it is probable that his refusal was also partly due to the desire he had expressed to Butler to have his fling before he went into harness. He wanted to play the part of the candid friend to the new Government, and he communicated his intention to Lord Clarendon, who had accepted his old post of Foreign Minister in the Administration. Clarendon was alarmed at the prospect of this formidable colt taking the bit in his teeth and causing trouble. Early in December, while the Government was still barely formed, we find him writing to his kinsman :

The Grove, *Tuesday night.*—I don't think that I in any way misapprehended what you said to me on Monday, and your letter of to-day proves to me that I did not.

I agree with you that Gladstone's policy should be bold and vigorous, but I don't agree with you in assuming that it will not be

so; yet such must be your opinion if you have already prepared a programme of measures some of which you know he could not now assent to because the country is not yet ripe for them.

You say that no more efficient aid can be given to the Government than by compelling them to pronounce upon these measures. In my humble opinion no course could be adopted more palpably hostile and embarrassing to the Government. On the other hand I think the plan well devised if your object is to take the place that Bright has hitherto occupied, but then you cannot, any more than he has ever done, call yourself a "true and loyal supporter of the Government." In all sincerity I hope that the line of conduct you may pursue will redound to your honour and be satisfactory to yourself.

It would seem that one of Harcourt's criticisms was that the advanced men were not getting sufficient representation in the Cabinet, for Clarendon writes:

G. C., *December* 9, 1868.—I had read the Art. in the *Telegraph* before you directed my attention to it, and should have had no difficulty in designating the author even if it had not been a transcript of your letter to me yesterday.

It is a war-cry against Gladstone, but as yet not a faithful expression of public opinion. . . .

But the article in the *Telegraph* was not Harcourt's, as appears from the following letter from Clarendon the next day, still expostulating with his intransigeant relative:

G. C., *December* 10, 1868.—Pray believe that I did not mean to do you an injustice by assuming that the Art. in the *Telegraph* was written or *inspired* by you. I thought it was because it contained not only opinions but expressions identical with those of your letter to me the previous day. You tell me I am mistaken however, and I have only to ask your pardon for my erroneous assumption.

But now I must correct an error of yours which is that I am *offended* at your plain speaking, whereas it has through life been my object *to get at* opinions which differed from my own. My friendship and regard for you have led me to discuss the course of conduct you intended to pursue, which seemed to me unfair towards Gladstone and that if I chanced to be right you would be sorry hereafter. I had no other wish than that you should be cautious on first crossing the threshold of parliamentary life.

In the meantime Gladstone had been immersed in the difficulties of Cabinet-making and with no one had those

difficulties been more severe than with Bright, who Harcourt apparently assumed was being left out. When at last Bright's indisposition to take office was overcome, Harcourt wrote congratulating him on having joined the Ministry. In his reply Bright said :

ROCHDALE, *December* 17, 1868.—It was a hard struggle for me, for I had all along determined not to take office, but I have surrendered to the pressure put upon me, and I hope what I have done is right. I am glad to have your kind expression of opinion upon what I have done. . . . It was well you went to Oxford and not to Liverpool.

The anxiety to see Bright in the Ministry was evidence of the movement of Harcourt's mind to the Left, but the general attitude of which Clarendon complained was probably nothing more than the natural disposition of a combative spirit to be "again the Government" and to explore the parliamentary field by adopting guerilla warfare. Clarendon was not the only person at this time who was disturbed about Harcourt. His brother at Nuneham, referring no doubt to the offer of the Judge-Advocate-Generalship, wrote :

December 12.—I am very glad to see by the papers that you are on the road to advancement.

I have never disguised the extreme annoyance which your position as Radical member for Oxford causes me, and as long as such a position continues I cannot look upon your connection with Nuneham as anything but a misfortune.

This does not, however, diminish in the least the pleasure I feel in your well doing. This must always increase as I hope your success will increase, and you may believe from past experience that no one will be so heartily or affectionately glad as I shall be at everything which conduces to your happiness. A relationship like ours is not lightly forgotten, though clouds may sometimes intervene for a time.

The wound continued to rankle, and writing on the following February 25, from Hastings, he, much in the spirit of Sir Anthony Absolute, warned him that he must get a hemisphere of his own :

Your successful and good speech gave me sincere pleasure, and only made me the more regret that the stool you stand upon is

such a thorn in my side as to introduce very mixed feelings on the subject of your parliamentary career.

My personal feelings towards yourself and your dear boy are of course unchanged ; but I think you hardly realize the extent of my dislike to your present connection with Oxford sufficiently to understand why, as long as it continues, I can have no sort of pleasure in meeting you in Oxfordshire or in thinking of you in connection with the Nuneham property. Here, or on any other neutral ground, it will always give me the greatest pleasure to see you and yours. . . .

CHAPTER X

BACK TO THE *ALABAMA*

Whewell Professor of International Law—Seward's conditions for the *Alabama* Arbitration—His theory of a local insurrection —Harcourt defines his position on the *Alabama* Claims—War and Trade—The Fish Despatch—Expatriation and Naturalization—The *Civis Romanus* doctrine—Royal Commission on Naturalization.

IT is possible that Harcourt had another motive for not putting himself into official harness too hurriedly. He had won a unique position in the country as an international lawyer, and although international law, as he had told Lord Russell in accepting payment for his work, was his "passion not his profession," it was a subject which seriously challenged his interest in politics. And at this time a crowning distinction and an attractive opportunity in this field were within his grasp. He was still perhaps undecided between the claims of the law and the claims of politics. The highest achievements in either sphere were open to him, and though his love of combat drew him to one, his intellectual interest was powerfully engaged by the other. He had taken silk in 1866, and, as Spencer Butler's letter of congratulation after the Oxford election shows, had had dreams of the Lord Chief Justiceship. A parliamentary career, so far from being an obstacle to such ambitions, was, in his case, the true path to their attainment. But before pursuing that path he explored another which left him more freedom and independence than a law office under the Crown would have given him. Dr. Whewell, the Master of Trinity, died in 1866, leaving in his will provision for the foundation of a Chair of

International Law at Cambridge. The Whewell Professor had to deliver at least twelve lectures annually, and it was required by the founder that he should " make it his aim in all parts of his treatment of the subject to lay down such rules and to suggest such measures as may tend to diminish the causes of war and finally to extinguish war between nations."

By a singular coincidence it seems that the idea of the professorship was first discussed by Whewell when he was on a visit to Canon Harcourt, whose son was destined to be the first holder of the Chair. There were several distinguished men who had claims upon so desirable a position. H. S. Maine was among them. He had gone to Calcutta, but contemplated returning to England, and he wrote to Harcourt on November 29, 1868, expressing his preference for the contemplated Professorship of Jurisprudence at Oxford, but indicating that if that fell through he " did not consider himself debarred by anything which passed between us from standing for the Whewell Professorship." He added :

> I dare say you will deem it profoundly immaterial whether I stand or not. But it would give me great pain to find myself a candidate and then to discover that you thought the step a breach of an understanding with yourself. I shall be greatly obliged to you if you will let me know your view of the situation.

In the end Maine[1] did not stand, but among the eight candidates the most formidable rival of Harcourt was another friend of the Apostolic days, Fitzjames Stephen. The prestige attaching to " Historicus " carried the day, and Harcourt was appointed to the Chair on March 2, 1869. The first letter of congratulation he received was from W. H. Thompson, for whose appointment as Master of Trinity in succession to Whewell Harcourt had laboured industriously in the teeth of much opposition. Another letter no doubt gave him even more satisfaction. It was from his father at Nuneham. Canon Harcourt had the scholar's love of the collegiate life and the scholar's dislike of the political world, and he had wanted his brilliant son to remain at Cambridge.

[1] Maine succeeded to the Chair on Harcourt's resignation in 1887.

In standing for the Whewell Professorship, Harcourt, whose affection for his father was always an active influence on his conduct, knew that success in this matter would give keen pleasure to the Canon, who had shared the family disquiet at his political development. He was not disappointed, though the Canon's letter was double-edged. He wrote (March 4):

My dearest Willie,—I am rejoiced to hear of your appointment to the Professorship, and shall hope soon to hear that your first Lecture deserves comparison with that fine one on International Law by Sir J. Macintosh, and that you will not, like him, stop short with the past history of that grand and imperfectly studied subject, but pursue it with the principles on which it does or ought to rest. This would afford me sincere satisfaction, whilst on the contrary it would be nothing but pain and grief to me to hear of your being implicated in a conspiracy to rob the Almighty, to give to Cæsar the things which belong to God, which have been devoted to His service by immemorial usage, and are applied to it at this moment more perfectly and efficiently than in any former age—such a policy violates the highest and most sacred of principles, and therefore can never prosper. Entertaining this opinion, as I do with the deepest conviction, it would be, my dear William, with no common regret that I should see a son of mine involved in so heavy a responsibility.

As he had admitted in his letter to Mrs. Ponsonby, Harcourt was often too careless of the feelings of others, but he was never forgetful of the feelings of his father. The letter which I have quoted indicates the Canon's atttiude on the Irish Church question, and it is not without significance that Harcourt did not take office until after his father's death.

The appointment to the Professorship did not involve residence at Cambridge, but under the terms of Whewell's will Harcourt was entitled to a handsome suite of rooms in the New Court—"I fear they are *not* rent free," wrote Thompson to him—and these he took and long continued to use. King Edward, when Prince of Wales, stayed in them on his visits to his son at Cambridge. The distinction conferred on "Historicus" came at a time when the prolonged controversy which had made his reputation was once more acute. The *Alabama* question still clouded the sky and seemed

wellnigh insoluble. The grievance of America was indisputable ; but since the war the attitude of the American Government had made the question of reparation by England extremely difficult. In 1867, Lord Stanley, then Foreign Minister, had suggested arbitration, but Seward had formally declined the proposal. The United States would only accept arbitration on condition that England's concession of belligerent rights at the beginning of the war formed part of the case for the arbitrators' decision. The British Government, on the contrary, insisted that an actual state of war should be assumed to have existed, and that upon this assumption the arbitrator should proceed to consider the claims of the United States to compensation. Seward's argument was that but for the English proclamation of neutrality there would never have been civil war in America ; that it was England who gave it the name of war ; and that but for our "intervention" it would have been a mere domestic insurrection with which the world would have had nothing to do. If this argument was sound, it followed, as "Historicus" showed in a succession of powerful letters during January 1868, that England was not only responsible for all the damage done by the *Alabama* but for all the damage done throughout the war. She was, in a word, the sole cause of the war. But this wild theory was destroyed by Seward's own despatches, which Harcourt produced with smashing effect. He pointed out, for example, that on May 4, 1861, nine days before the English proclamation of neutrality, Seward wrote to the American Minister in Paris :

> The insurgents have instituted revolution with *open, flagrant, deadly war* to compel the United States to acquiesce in the dismemberment of the Union. The United States has accepted *this Civil War* as an inevitable necessity.

This paper (commented Harcourt, January 20, 1868) is a record laid on the table of Congress, circulated through the world, and yet the man who wrote it now says that on May 13, 1861, "the disturbance in the United States was merely a local insurrection," that "it wanted the name of war to be a civil war and to live" . . . and that "the President declined to confer upon the insurrection the pregnant baptismal name of Civil War to the prejudice of the nation

whose destiny was in his hands," but that this was done " by the Queen of England, who baptized the slave insurrection within the United States a civil war. . . ." On May 4, Mr. Seward writes officially, " The United States has accepted this civil war as an inevitable necessity." But for the Queen of England to affirm on May 13 that a civil war had been accepted by the United States is a wrong, forsooth, for which England is to pay an indemnity.

On another point Harcourt showed how ill Seward's record of facts in 1868 accorded with the record of the same facts in 1861. He now denied that the blockade was a blockade until England converted the " local insurrection " into a civil war. It was only a closing of the ports by municipal law. But, says Harcourt, on May 2, 1861—eleven days before the Queen's proclamation of neutrality—Seward, replying to the Spanish Minister, described the conditions of *the blockade* as follows :

1. That the blockade will be strictly enforced upon *the principles recognized by the law of nations.*
2. That armed vessels of *neutral states* will have the right to enter and depart from the inderdicted ports.

It is unnecessary to pursue the endless controversy in detail. We may wonder to-day that so unreal a point could for years have menaced the peace of the two countries. There was ground for arguing that England was over-hasty in recognizing belligerency. Goldwin Smith held that view. When in November 1868 Harcourt issued a pamphlet on the subject, he sent the proofs to Goldwin Smith, who in his comment on them said :

I wish Bemis (the American " Historicus ") was away, or that there was less of him. He is an opponent scarcely worthy of you, and the operation of kicking him rather spoils the judicial dignity of the work. . . . You do not convince me that more pains should not have been taken to soften the recognition of belligerency. If not strictly necessary it would have been wise. As to the recognition itself, you are overwhelming.

But, in any case, the grievance on this point had no relevance to the case of the *Alabama*, and to make its consideration a condition of assenting to arbitration in regard to the depredations of the *Alabama* was to make an agreement

impossible. On the question of the *Alabama* Harcourt continued impenitent. It was an offence against our municipal law, and the vessel ought not to have been permitted to enter our ports abroad. But—again in opposition to Goldwin Smith—he took a too narrow legal view as to our responsibility for damage done by the vessel on the high seas. He held that as the launching and equipment of the *Alabama* was not a breach of international law that responsibility did not exist. But he was in favour of arbitration if it could be confined to two points—(1) whether the English Government took proper precautions and exhibited adequate vigilance; and (2) whether, if they did not, indemnity was due. In a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* (January 1868), replying to an attack on him, "Historicus" defended his record in the great controversy that he had waged for seven years:

"You sneer (he said) at my pretensions to 'have done all I can to be polite and agreeable to the Americans.' You are unjust in this. I never said I had been 'polite and agreeable' to the Americans. I said I had done what I could to 'maintain the friendship of England and America.' That, in my opinion, is not to be attained by an attempt to be 'polite and agreeable' to either country, but by trying to be *just* to both. It has been my fortune to have to argue questions of public law both for and against America. I argued for America when it was proposed, contrary to the precedents and the principles of the law of nations, to recognize the independence of the Southern States. I argued for America when it was sought to violate or restrict the belligerent right of blockade. I argued for America when the English Government were attacked for stopping the Confederate Rams. I argued for America and against the English Government in favour of excluding the *Alabama* from the ports of the realm. I argued for America in these cases because I thought she had the right on her side, though the public voice of a large and influential class in England was against her. I argued for England and against America in the case of the *Trent*, in the case of the *Alabama* claims and above all on the question of the recognition of belligerency, because I knew her to be in the wrong. I have defended the cause of America when she was weak because I believed her to be right, and I claim the title to resist her when I know she is wrong, and to refute the arguments of those who counsel submission to her chiefly because they believe her to be powerful. That I have been unfair to America is a charge which I know the opinion of America will not sustain. I may have been

mistaken. God knows it is likely enough. But in endeavouring to elucidate questions which concern the peace of two kindred nations which I equally admire—which I could almost say I equally love —I have to the best of my ability, and with some labour and industry, declared what I believed to be right. I have been the partisan of no Government and the advocate of neither nation. I have sought peace where alone it can be found—in the paths of law, of justice and of truth. Pray excuse this egotism, but it is the nature of any man to protest against injustice.

With the failure of Stanley's proposal, the controversy between the two countries continued inflamed and irritating, and it was one of the gravest questions which the new Ministry had to face. Writing to Harcourt, Clarendon expressed his disappointment that he had not come down to visit him :

The Grove, *December* 6, 1868.—I am on every account sorry, as among other things I wished to have a talk with you on our report, about which I am painfully anxious, as it appears that things are going to the devil at Washington, mainly owing, I apprehend, to the indiscretions of Reverdy Johnson which have intensified the anti-English feeling, and I fear that Seward now thinks there is more capital to be made by throwing over than by supporting his Minister here. Don't mention this, but an article in *The Times* yesterday shows that Delane is aware of the rocks ahead. It appears that immense importance is attached to the naturalization question and that the settlement of it or at all events the introduction of a Bill into Parliament would go far to smooth matters on the five ugly questions on which negotiations are pending. Sorely against my will and notwithstanding the arguments against myself that I honestly urged I have been talked into the F.O. (Foreign Office) again. . . . The moral of this long story is that I want very much your aid in *understanding* the report.

Reverdy Johnson, who was the United States Minister in London, in a speech at Manchester criticized Harcourt's address on War and the Working Man at the Social Science Conference at Birmingham, and asserted the doctrine of the immunity of the private property of belligerents at sea in war time. Johnson had justified the course taken by his Government in declining to accede unconditionally to the Declaration of Paris with regard to the abolition of privateering, on the ground of the particular interests of the United States. Harcourt declined to argue the question on "the ground of the special advantages that may accrue to

individual nations." To Johnson's proposal that men might be killed in battle, but that the merchant should go his way unharmed, he retorted (*The Times*, March 1, 1869):

> Now, I confess that I am not completely satisfied that this plan of unrestricted personal slaughter, by which people are to be killed first, and the survivors afterwards to be consoled by the profits of trade, would, on the whole, conduce to the happiness of mankind. . . . Mr. Johnson says that the horrors of war are already sufficiently great; and it is unhappily true. But shocking as it may be, it is unfortunately true likewise that men are far less afflicted by the sufferings, however terrible, of others, than by a loss much less considerable that befalls themselves. Men read with equanimity and even pride the story of the storming of Badajos or the field of Gettysburg who would shrink from the ruin of their own fortunes. I, for one, am not disposed to part with the suretyship of the commercial class as a guarantee against war. Mr. Johnson says, "Why should the innocent merchant who has had nothing to do with the war, or the causes of the war, specially suffer for it?" I cannot agree that the merchant has any special claim to the epithet of "innocent." On the whole, inasmuch as his class is much more powerful, he is far more responsible for the war than the innocent soldier or sailor—in most countries the victim of conscription—but who according to the modern theory are exclusively to suffer for it. I venture to affirm that, in this country at least, no war could be made against the united resistance of the commercial classes. Is is desirable to diminish the inducement to that resistance? During the last hundred years, while trade was comparatively safe under the overwhelming maritime superiority of Great Britain, the commercial class had not as a rule been hostile to wars which more often than not served their interests. The City of London which flouted the pacific Walpole, idolized the warlike genius of Chatham. Burke at Bristol, and Brougham at Liverpool idly preached the gospel of peace; if the carrying trade had been at stake they might possibly have been better listened to. . . . So great a transaction as war, involving such horrible evils and such tremendous responsibility, ought not to be conducted on the principle of limited liability. . . . The proposal to exempt commerce from the operation of hostilities seems to me a direct encouragement to reckless trading in war. It resembles the conduct of a spendthrift who, in contemplation of bankruptcy, makes a settlement on his family, and then proceeds to ruin the rest of the world at his ease.

Replying in a later letter (March 15) to the *Economist*, which had charged him with confounding the general foreign trade with the carrying trade of the belligerents, Harcourt showed that the general foreign trade of the belligerent

already enjoyed the desired immunity, by virtue of the Declaration of Paris, when placed under a neutral flag. That rule was not for the benefit of the belligerent but of the neutral.

What I argued was that because you had by a rule intended to benefit the neutral indirectly favoured the belligerent, that circumstance affords no ground for establishing another rule directly in favour of the belligerent, but offering no advantage to the neutral.

Summing up his general attitude he said, in words which gain a new force from the experience of the World War:

I believe the idea of reducing war to a military and naval duel between armies and fleets is as chimerical and less humane than the romantic project of chivalry to settle the fate of the Moslem and the Christian by a single combat between Saladin and Richard. These two nations are locked in the deadly embrace of war, whether they be fighting for empire or struggling for independence. They will deal the fatal blow with every weapon which fortune places within their grasp. Passion is deaf, patriotism is unscrupulous, fear is cruel. To attempt to disarm war of its horrors is an idle dream and a dangerous delusion; let us labour at the more practical task of making it impossible.

II

But this argument with Reverdy Johnson was only a digression from the main theme that continued to disturb the diplomatic atmosphere. General Grant had now become President of the United States and Seward had been succeeded by Fish as Secretary of State. But the change so far from producing a more accommodating spirit at Washington made the situation much worse. Clarendon at the Foreign Office was reduced to an indignant despair by the attitude of Fish. His state of mind is recorded in his letters to Harcourt in the autumn:

The Grove, *October* 17, 1869.—I have been operated upon by Motley (the new United States Minister) and as I had no chloroform it was not pleasant. He read me the Fish despatch which, as nearly as I could count, was twelve sheets long. Its tone is that of studied courtesy and injured friendship, but it reopens the whole question in all its details and insists on all the old facts and arguments just as if it was brand new matter and was to be discussed for the first

time. They *ask for* nothing, but leave it to me to propose reparation for our irreparable misdeeds. . . .

THE GROVE, *October* 25, 1869.—I was glad to find that your opinion corresponded so exactly with my own on the Fish Despatch. . . . To-morrow the Cabinet meets and I shall learn the opinion of Colleagues. Hitherto I only know Gladstone's, which does not much differ from yours or mine, but there is a passage in his letter of yesterday upon which I want your advice and opinion. After saying that they ask for a proposal which we cannot with honour make, he adds: "Might you not glance at a mode of proceeding such as this—that the two countries should set about the consideration of a good prospective system and should thereafter, in the light of principles thus elucidated, reconsider the manner of arbitration or any other mode of proceeding in the *Alabama* case. Might not something be hammered out of this?"

Clarendon wrote to Harcourt (November 4) asking him to come to the Grove to meet the Gladstones and perhaps Bright, and proposing to send him the draft of the British Government's reply to the document Harcourt called the "piscine despatch." Harcourt's observations did not reach him, however, until after the draft had been considered and approved by the Cabinet. In the meantime Fish, who had up till that moment kept his own despatch secret "in a manner quite unprecedented," had suddenly sent to the newspapers the whole correspondence with the exception of the second British despatch, which he had suppressed. Clarendon, who had no desire at a critical moment to appear hostile to Fish, preferred to leave the American people to discover Fish's manœuvre. "This feeling," he wrote to Harcourt on December 30, "prevented my alluding to their assumption that the war had for its object the abolition of slavery, but as I have long desired that this should be done I need not say with what satisfaction I read your *smasher* of yesterday."

The "smasher" to which Clarendon refers was one of a series of letters which Harcourt in his old rôle of "Historicus" was addressing to *The Times* at this period in reply to Fish. The attitude of this diplomatist was certainly disquieting. Not content with the original claim of Seward that the recognition of belligerency should be part and

parcel of any reference to the case of the *Alabama* to arbitration, he now embittered the situation by insisting that, as the North fought for the abolition of slavery, England ought not to have been neutral at all. "Since the famous bulletins of the first Napoleon," wrote Harcourt, "such liberties have probably never been taken with facts for political purposes as those ventured upon in the despatch of Mr. Fish." He disposed of the assertion that the North began the war to abolish slavery by pointing out that Lincoln not only disclaimed any such purpose in his first inaugural message, but still more clearly disavowed it in a famous letter in the second year of the war in which he said:

> My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the coloured race I do because I believe it helps to save this Union; and what I forbear I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.

It followed, said Harcourt unanswerably, that "if the rebellion had been successfully crushed in its commencement, the Union would have been restored and slavery with it." Fish's claim, therefore, was an afterthought that had no basis in historical fact. As to the suggestion of "warm neutrality" it was a contradiction in terms, for which, according to his practice, he put the American jurists in evidence. "A neutral," he said, "has no business to be warm; it is essentially his duty to be not only lukewarm, but cold. A warm neutrality is neither more nor less than a fraudulent neutrality. You might as well talk of hot ice or cold steam." Fish's claim that the Confederates had no rights at sea—a theory, as Harcourt said, of "divisible belligerency"—was met by a torrent of precedents from the records of the United States during the War of Independence and the South American Wars.

But the storm that raged around the *Alabama* was not the only menace to Anglo-American relations at this time. Another cause of irritation arose in connection with the

Fenian agitation and the status of Irishmen in the United States. Fenians could not, of course, be tried in Ireland for acts done in the United States, but once they had committed some offence on British soil which enabled them to be brought to trial, could evidence of preparation in the United States be admitted? All international questions affecting persons were, and are, complicated by the fact that the English-speaking peoples base nationality on the place of birth, Great Britain claiming allegiance from all persons, of whatever parentage, born within the dominions of the Crown, while the Latin nations base citizenship on the nationality of the father. English law, moreover, regarded British citizenship as indelible, and as being handed down from father to son, wherever the son might be born. Many nice diplomatic questions had arisen out of this confusion during the American Civil War, when natural-born Englishmen resident in the States had asked to be protected by the British Minister against conscription, and the case of Don Pacifico was still fresh in the public mind. In France the military authorities were questioning the right to exemption from military service of the children of foreigners born in France.

In January and February 1868 "Historicus" contributed to *The Times* a series of letters on the various international questions arising out of the treatment of aliens and conflicting national laws on nationality. He began by exposing the inconsistencies of American statesmen on the question of expatriation, and the unreasonableness of claiming that persons seeking naturalization in America should divest themselves of their nationality while the Americans themselves insisted on the indelibility of American citizenship, and he suggested that the first step necessary was a definition of that citizenship. Harcourt desired to see general international agreement on these questions, but failing that, thought certain simple steps would serve to mitigate existing difficulties:

First (he said), the right of expatriation should be generally admitted; secondly, that right should be limited by certain condi-

tions ; thirdly, it belongs as much to the native state to prescribe the conditions of severance as it does to the state of adoption to prescribe the conditions of naturalization ; fourthly, it would be highly desirable that the conditions on which one state confers and the other severs the tie of citizenship should be regulated by special convention, as in the case of extradition. This would be best accomplished by a general agreement ; but if this be impracticable, then it should be made the subject of separate treaties.

He takes the opportunity of pressing on a not too willing public the principle that the Law of Nations is as real a thing as the municipal law of any state, and in a characteristic passage (*The Times*, February 6, 1868) disposes of the Palmerstonian doctrine of *Civis Romanus sum*. Quoting a famous passage from Gladstone's denunciation of the doctrine in the Don Pacifico debate, he proceeds :

Well, justice and common-sense were in the minority then, as they very often are when popular prejudice and popular passion run high. But time and experience ultimately vindicate the truth, and now that we have our own Don Pacificos on hand who claim to be *Cives Americani*, we are beginning to be a little more disposed to listen to reason on the subject. The ordinary Englishman's idea of his rights as a *Civis Romanus* are simple enough. He thinks himself entitled whenever he goes to trial by jury, to *habeas corpus*, to a Protestant Chapel and the Bill of Rights—in short, to do and say what he likes and make himself as disagreeable as he pleases, with the comfortable confidence that there are any number of ironclads in the background to protect him from being called to account for it. This was all very well for a real *Civis Romanus*, who was the citizen of an universal empire which recognized no independence of States and tolerated no equality of nations. It becomes a very inconvenient and perilous doctrine where it is applied to times where there are more nations than one who may be disposed to play at the same game. . . . Let us, then, disabuse our minds of the *Civis Romanus* idea. It is historically an anachronism and a blunder ; legally it is an injustice and a wrong ; politically it is a folly and a crime. The phrase belongs to the vocabulary of the bully and the doctrine is the policy of the oppressor. Let us hope we shall hear no more of it here. I fear we are destined to listen to a good deal of its echo elsewhere.

He goes on in a succession of letters to explain the right of each nation to the administration of the law within its own territory, and examines the difference between the English, French and American law in bringing to justice

criminals whose crimes were committed without its boundaries. He suggests the summoning of a congress of the principal nations for the settlement of the questions of naturalization, expatriation, criminal jurisdiction over aliens, and extradition. Let England take the lead in this great task. "It would be the proper answer to the sneers which are too often levelled at her selfish isolation and insular pride." The statesman who inaugurated such an achievement "would have done more than all the speculations of philosophers and the dreams of philanthropists to give reality to those projects of universal peace which have too long been deemed to belong to the Commonwealth of Utopia."

But public opinion was not ripe for this enlightened anticipation of the League of Nations. All that could be aimed at was an understanding with the United States, and with this in view a Royal Commission was appointed in May 1868 to inquire into the British laws of naturalization and allegiance. Clarendon presided over this Commission, and Harcourt was invited to become a member. The Commission reported in April of the next year. They recommended that British subjects naturalized in a foreign country should cease to be British subjects, that is, they proposed that the doctrine of the indelibility of British nationality should be abandoned.

> It is inexpedient (they said) that British law should maintain in theory, or should by foreign nations be supposed to maintain in practice, any obligations which it cannot enforce, and ought not to enforce if it could; and it is unfit that a country should remain subject to claims for protection on the part of persons who, as far as in them lies, have severed their connection with it.

So far Harcourt's view had prevailed, but the Report went in detail into the question of who should be regarded as natural-born British subjects, and on this point Harcourt was not in agreement with the majority of the Commissioners. By this time he was a member of Parliament, and found himself compelled to oppose the proposals put forward by the Government.

The recommendations of the Committee were rejected

on the ground that the limited object of the Bill was the regulation of expatriation and repatriation on a basis which would permit the required understanding with the United States. The Act, somewhat ambiguous and timorous as it was, formed the basis of the convention signed in May 1870 between the United States and Great Britain which provides that naturalization in either country is to be valid immediately on completion, but permits the resumption of British or American nationality on certain conditions.

With this convention the sky began to clear over the *Alabama* issue. Another measure passed a few months later (August 1870) helped to the same end. It was the new Foreign Enlistment Act, based on the recommendations of the Neutrality Commission of which Harcourt was a member. In one respect it goes beyond those recommendations, because it gives power to the local authority named to seize a vessel if they have reason to believe that she is about to escape. Harcourt, pursuing his line on the Commission, secured the insertion of a clause that in the case of a pre-war contract the builder would not be liable if he gave notice of his proceeding to the Secretary of State.

The *Alabama* controversy was at last in a fair way for settlement.

CHAPTER XI

BELOW THE GANGWAY

The New Men—Harcourt's political creed still Incomplete—First Speeches in the House—New Year's Speech (1870) at Oxford—Irish Land Question—Education Act—Passage of arms with Mr. Gladstone—Excessive Expenditure on armaments—Death of Lord Clarendon—Franco-German War—Question of Neutrality—Criticism from Below the Gangway—Abolition of Purchase by Royal Warrant—Eighteenth-century prejudices—Law Reform—Death of Lady Beaconsfield—The Invasion Panic—Paramount importance of the Navy—The Battle of the Parks—The Ballot Act—Freedom for the Public House.

THE new Parliament which met in February 1869 is a landmark in political history. It introduced new leaders, new ideas and a new spirit into affairs. Not since Pitt and Fox faced each other across the floor of the House had there been so Homeric a conflict of personality in Parliament as that presented by Gladstone and Disraeli. They were flint and steel to each other's genius, the one all moral fervour, to whom politics were an article of religion, the other a romantic artist, to whom they were the material of a diverting tale. Gladstone always seemed to be hurrying with a message from Mount Sinai and meeting Disraeli coming from the feet of Scheherazade. The gravity of the one and the levity of the other left them no common ground of intercourse. To the great sceptic, Gladstone's seriousness was an incomparable jest; to the great Churchman, Disraeli's cynicism was an outrage on all the sanctities of life. They were alike in one respect. Each had created a new party. Gladstone had been a Tory, but he had never been a Whig, and the party he led was a new instru-

ment, forged by his own genius and inspired by his own imperious purpose. Disraeli had been a Radical in his youth, but he had never been a Tory, and the party he led was the creation of his own romantic imagination. The change of spirit was emphasized by the operation of the new Reform Act. For the first time the towns had effective representation, and the old political order gave place to another type of parliamentary intelligence, more democratic, more instructed, more in touch with realities. It was the beginning of a new era, social as well as political.

In no previous Parliament had there been anything comparable to the legislative activity of 1869 and 1870. Harcourt had decided on the rôle of the candid friend of the Government, but with so energetic a spirit of reform in control of affairs he had at first relatively little scope for criticism. His own political creed was still in process of development. In many respects he was an advanced Radical. He was a passionate anti-militarist and the most militant of peace men. He hated the Imperialism of Disraeli in England as much as he hated the Imperialism of Louis Napoleon in France. His views on the land had brought him into collision with his brother, and his advocacy of the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church had, he knew, given pain to a father whom he deeply revered. His study of international law had led him to a conception of world relationships far in advance of the general thought of the time, and on questions like education, taxation and free trade he represented the advanced opinion of the party. But there were gaps in his equipment, as in the case of the liquor question, in regard to which he still adopted an extreme *laissez-faire* attitude that had brought him into conflict with the temperance reformers. While a candidate for Oxford he had, replying to a correspondent who had asked for his opinion on the compulsory closing of public-houses on Sunday, said (*Oxford Chronicle*, June 30, 1868):

> Each man should be governed by the needs of his own health and

the dictates of his own conscience. I have been all my life a hard working man. I find that after a hard day's work I receive not only enjoyment, but strength and refreshment from a good glass of beer or wine. I often make an excursion out of London on the Saturday and Sunday, and seek fresh air and exercise, after the toil of the week, at Richmond, or Windsor, or Maidenhead. I should think it a great hardship if, after a good walk, I could not get a good glass of beer. . . . I should not think of imposing on others what I should deem a hardship to myself. I know nothing more to be desired than that the labouring man, upon his only holiday, should (not inconsistently with his service of God) find relaxation for his mind and refreshment for his body. We must trust to education, reflection, and religion to keep men within the bounds of moderation. The scheme of compulsion has been tried in some of the States of America and has failed. If I am not mistaken, the State of Maine has repealed its liquor law.

This description of the idyllic week-ends of "Historicus" and the conclusion drawn from it annoyed the United Kingdom Alliance, who had promoted in Parliament a permissive Bill embodying the principle of local option, and a lengthy correspondence ensued. Harcourt admitted in reply to criticism that when he wrote "Maine" he should have said "Massachusetts." On the general question he contented himself with saying that it was a great mistake to allow legislation to outrun the opinion and conscience of the majority; that laws were never effective when they were more stringent than the general moral sense of the people was disposed to support, and that legislation necessarily lags behind, though in the end it always follows the aspirations of the social reformer.

In the great legislative achievement of the first session, Irish Disestablishment, Harcourt took little active part. The election had been fought and won on the issue, and it only remained to give parliamentary effect to the decision. But he lost no time in trying his parliamentary paces. He made his maiden speech on February 23, 1869, on Lord Bury's motion to alter the law compelling members on accepting office under the Crown to seek re-election. He opposed the motion in an elaborate set speech, the rhetoric of which was a little in excess of the needs of the occasion. It was extremely well received, highly praised by Gladstone

and much discussed in the Press. "The speech of this future Solicitor-General, as so many regard him," said the *Spectator*, "was listened to with the most fastidious criticism on both sides of the House, and on both sides of the House evidently more than fulfilled expectation." In a long criticism of the speech the *Manchester Examiner* referred to the unusual curiosity with which the first utterance of "Historicus" had been awaited, and its marked success. The writer dwelt upon the distinction of his presence, his "clear and pleasant voice," his lucidity of style, his carefully marshalled argument, his irony and sarcasm and his power of combining breadth of view with monotony of detail. But his oratory was not free from faults. "It wants freedom and spontaneity. . . . The slowness with which he speaks tends to become tedious. His delivery and manner are too didactic and dogmatic, and it must be confessed that his apparent confidence in himself verges upon, if it does not pass, the line which separates confidence from self-conceit." It remained true to the end that in his prepared speeches Harcourt tended to be too formal and elaborate. Nature gave him an unrivalled endowment for debate—a full mind, a ready speech and an abundant humour—but he never wholly trusted it, and it was not uncommon for him to rise and delight the House with a breezy and devastating retort upon an opponent and then relapse upon a prepared speech which destroyed much of the effect of his livelier, natural style.

It was to legal rather than general political subjects that Harcourt applied himself in his parliamentary apprenticeship. On March 1 he attacked the question of "corruption" at elections.

A week later he raised a kindred subject, moving for the appointment of a Select Committee to inquire into the registration of voters in parliamentary boroughs. Sir Robert Peel, he said, had stated that the battle of the constitution must be fought in the registration courts. English government was understood to rest on the House of Commons, and the House of Commons on the constituencies, but what

the constituencies rested on was by no means clear. They appeared to stand on the overseer, who worked on the rate-book, an imperfect and incorrect document for the purpose. He set out with great clearness the existing chaos, resulting in the exclusion from the poll of many qualified electors, especially from the working-classes, and asked for a Committee to recommend the necessary legislation. The motion was agreed to, and on March 19 the Committee was appointed. Stafford Northcote's name was the first on the list, but Harcourt was elected Chairman and drafted the report. Dilke was also a member. The report is dated July 2 of the same year (1869). In 1871 a Bill was brought in by Harcourt, Dilke and others to give effect to this report. The question, however, aroused little interest, and when the order for the Committee was read, the Bill after a short discussion was withdrawn.

In his advocacy of reform in the "fifties" Harcourt had taken the view that the power of the middle classes was excessive as against the working classes, and his early activities in Parliament were largely concerned with improving the political and social status of the working man. "I have always deeply regretted," he said in the debates on the Assessed Rates Bill, "and I regret now, that we have not in the House a member of the working classes to represent their interests." This attitude and Harcourt's proposals gave great offence to the *Standard*. Harcourt desired the Bill to be amended in a radical direction. It was designed to remove a very real grievance. The Reform Act of 1867 had secured household suffrage by an amendment which abolished the compounding of rates. This change, however, proved to be very hard on many poor people, who now had to face for the first time the visit of the rate-collector without having secured, in many cases, any reduction of their rents, and to find in one week money to meet a rate demand note for three months or for six. In Harcourt's words "the working classes had gained their political rights at the expense of their social comfort."

The *Standard* was outraged by this proposal to encourage

the working man to be improvident. The three months' or six months' demand for rates was a blessed stimulus to him to be thrifty, and any interference with it was an attack on "habits of providence." Harcourt did not carry his amendment to the Bill, but he secured from Goschen, who had the measure in charge, some valuable concessions which mitigated the grievance.

It was Harcourt's practice throughout his connection with Oxford to deliver a New Year's address on public affairs to his constituents at the annual dinner of the Ancient Order of Druids. In his speech on January 4, 1870, he urged that the disestablishment of the Irish Church had not settled our account with Ireland, and that the land question called for immediate treatment. The tenant's right in the improvements which his industry had invested in the soil must be secured. "Nothing could be more unjust, or, to use a phrase employed by Lord Clarendon, 'more felonious' than that a man, because he possessed the right to evict a tenant, should exercise that right without making any allowance for the capital which had been invested by the tenant in the improvement of the soil." His other main theme was education, and he pleaded for a national, unsectarian, publicly-supported and publicly-controlled system. This attitude on education was consistently maintained to the end, and he was one of the most active opponents of the Balfour Education Bill of 1902.

If Gladstone had had a comparatively easy task in attacking the first of the great Irish grievances, he paid the penalty when he came to the second. The tragic record of the misgovernment of Ireland had no more shameful chapter than that dealing with the land. Owned by absentee landlords and governed by an absentee Parliament, the interests of the tillers of the soil had been shamelessly disregarded. "Between the Union and the year 1870," says Lord Morley,[1] "Acts dealing with Irish land had been passed at Westminster. Every one of these Acts was in the interest of the landlord and against the tenant. A score of Insurrection

[1] Morley, *Life of Gladstone*, Bk. vi., Chap. ii.

Acts, no Tenant Right Act. Meanwhile Ireland had gone down into the dark gulf of the Famine." Out of the misery that was the fruit of this wrong came Fenianism and crime and the deadly expedient of coercion. Gladstone addressed himself to the task of removing the wrong by establishing the cultivator in his holding. His idea was modest enough. It was, he wrote in a letter to Cardinal Manning, "to prevent the landlord from using the terrible weapon of undue and unjust eviction, by so framing the handle that it shall cut his hands with the sharp edge of pecuniary damages. The man evicted without any fault and suffering the usual loss by it, will receive whatever the custom of the country gives, and, where there is no custom, according to a scale, besides whatever he can claim for permanent buildings or reclamation of land." In this way it was hoped wanton eviction would be extinguished and with it the power of the unjust augmentation of rent, which could only co-exist with the power of wanton or arbitrary eviction.

It was the first time for nearly a century that British statesmanship had entered on a large act of appeasement towards Irish secular discontent, and Gladstone found himself in the midst of a hornets' nest. He was assailed on all sides by actual hostility or competitive proposals. The Duke of Argyll was actively opposed to the scheme. Bright was urging a project of purchase by state aid; Chichester-Fortescue, the Irish Chief Secretary (who had married Lady Waldegrave), was insisting that more than compensation to tenants for their improvements was needed to settle the Irish land laws, and Clarendon was writing to Granville predicting the imminent break-up of the Government. In the midst of these conflicting counsels Stuart Mill was urging outside that the only effective plan was to buy out the landlords. The proposal was greeted as a wildly impracticable one, but in the end it was found to be the only way out. Harcourt, while giving general support to the Irish Land Bill, did not like the graduated scale of compensation, and wrote at great length to *The Times* analysing what seemed

to him to be its probable disastrous effects. He was opposed to the excessive subdivision of land and to peasant proprietorship, which he thought led to starving the soil. In the end Gladstone carried the Bill through without disaster to his Government.

II

It was in connection with the other great measure of 1870, the Education Bill, that Harcourt first crossed swords with Gladstone. Harcourt's expressed intention of adopting an independent attitude in Parliament was fully carried out in the debates on this Bill. He took an emphatically non-clerical view. He was a member of the Birmingham League, which stood for a national, free and compulsory system and for the absence of any kind of sectarian pressure. It was as a member of the League that Joseph Chamberlain first corresponded with him. Sir Charles Dilke, with whom Harcourt was closely associated at this time, went further, and stood for a purely secular system. In an extremely interesting letter written during the progress of the measure, Harcourt joins issue with him on this point.

Harcourt to Dilke.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, 1870.—I sincerely hope that you and I and Dixon shall be able to agree on some common course of action on Monday, as I feel sure that everything depends on it. We are fighting a great cause with inferior forces and everything must depend on husbanding our strength, using it to the best advantage and not exposing ourselves to needless defeats. We must always *seem* to win even though we do not get all we want. That is what up to this point we have accomplished. But we must not allow ourselves to be precipitated upon destruction by men who may be philosophers but who are not politicians (Fawcett).

We have thrown up the first earthwork against denominationalism in the Amendment, and we have smashed up the main assault of the enemy. We must now retire on the second line of defence. What is that to be ? I lay down first that the thing to be resisted is *denominationalism.* If it can be got rid of altogether—best. If not, then to the greatest degree—next best.

Now as a politician (not as a philosopher) I am quite satisfied that neither in the House of Commons nor in the country can we beat denominationalism by secularism. If we attempt to meet the

flood by the direct dyke it will simply be over our heads, and we shall go to the bottom. We must break the force of the wave by a side slope, and deal with its diminished weight afterwards as we best may.

If the Government succeed in Gladstone's plan of rival sectarian teaching by all Denominations out of school hours this is nothing but denominationalism run mad, and seems to me the very worst thing that could happen.[1] For my part I would prefer one sect to half a dozen on the principle that you can't have too little of a bad thing.

There remains that which to my mind is the only practicable means of defence. I mean the acceptance of the simple Bible reading in the time set apart for religious instruction—exclude everything else. Behind such a line of defence as this we shall rally a great party—I believe the most powerful party in the country.

Whatever objections you may have to the scheme it has the enormous advantage that it is substantially defensible, which in my judgment no other is. We shall drive our opponents to contend that the Bible is not enough to satisfy them and that they must and will have sectarianism, and in that position we can punch their heads instead of their punching ours.

You will say that after all this is nothing but a form of denominationalism and so it is—logically I admit it. But it is the smallest amount of denominationalism which in the present state of public opinion is attainable. Let us give our Republic not the best possible laws but the best which they will bear.

This is the essence of *politics*; all the rest is *speculation*. . . .

On the second reading of Forster's Bill, George Dixon, the spokesman of the Birmingham League, moved:

That this House is of opinion that no measure for the elementary education of the people will afford a satisfactory or permanent settlement which leaves the principle of religious instruction in schools supported by public funds and rates to be determined by local authorities.

When the debate on this amendment was resumed on March 15, Harcourt made a considerable speech. He defined the doctrine of religious equality:

If I understand the doctrine—it is this—that the State in its relations with its citizens is absolutely indifferent to all forms of religion and religious teaching, and as regards any funds raised either directly by the State, or indirectly under its authority, one

[1] In a letter to *The Times* (March 28) Harcourt says this would make the national schoolroom "the drum ecclesiastic of rival sects."

form of religious opinion has as full a right to share in the appropriation of such funds as another.

After prolonged discussion the Government met the point of the amendment by accepting the Cowper-Temple proposal that no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination should be taught in any school provided out of the rates, at the same time, however, conceding an increased grant from the Exchequer to denominational schools. This did not satisfy Harcourt, who had tabled the wider amendment that the religious instruction given in rate-aided schools should be undenominational in character and confined to unsectarian instruction in the Bible. In the course of the debate Gladstone said that Harcourt had described the Cowper-Temple amendment as exhibiting pure and undiluted denominationalism. "I am at a loss to conceive with what kind of fairness any person who has examined the matter can contrive to force even his organs of speech to utter such a statement," he said.

The next day Harcourt wrote as follows to Gladstone:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *June* 25, 1870.—I am sure you will be neither surprised nor displeased that I should be sensitive to censure coming from one for whom both in his public capacity and in his private character I have always felt and I hope not failed to show the deepest respect.

You will I feel confident forgive me if I am anxious to show you that the phrase of mine (however rhetorically "undiluted") on which you commented yesterday did not in fact bear the sense which you attributed to it.

I did not say that Mr. C. Temple's amendment was "pure and undiluted denominationalism." To have said so would have been no doubt absurd and untrue. What I did say was something which I conceive was very different. I expressed an opinion that Mr. C. Temple's amendment was an ineffectual counterpoise and safeguard against the denominationalism of the rest of the Bill, and especially of the new proposal to increase the Parliamentary grants (to denominational schools). And therefore that the Bill not by virtue of nor in spite of Mr. C. Temple's amendment remained a scheme of "pure and undiluted denominationalism."

I said in short that

$$+2-4=-2, \qquad \text{not that } +2=-2.$$

I may be quite wrong about my (− 4) and therefore in the net result, but surely I am guiltless of a misrepresentation which would have been unpardonable.

I did not feel that my opinions were of sufficient importance to justify me in the crisis of a great division attempting any public explanation. But I trust you will not misunderstand my motives in thus seeking to set myself right in your opinion.

I feel sorry that in maintaining to the best of my power what I have long held to be a principle of the first importance, viz. that of unsectarian religious instruction, I should have been forced in some degree into opposition to the policy of the Government, as well as to that of my friends of the League. But this seemed to me a question on which the assertion of independent opinion was not only admissible but necessary.

In withdrawing my amendment after your declaration last week with the object of supporting in Committee that of Mr. Jacob Bright, I took the course which I thought most likely to promote the cause I had at heart and the least calculated to obstruct the Bill.

I should be very sorry to remain under the impression which the tone of your remarks rather conveyed to me, that in freely criticising the religious clauses of the Bill you considered that I had been guilty either of disloyalty to your Government or of want of respect towards yourself.

Three days passed without reply. Then on June 28 Harcourt alluded to the misconception in the House, and thereupon Gladstone wrote to him as follows:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

10, DOWNING STREET, *June* 28.—As you gave me an opportunity this day in the House of expressing the pleasure with which I learned that I had mistaken the intended application of your reference to pure and undiluted denominationalism, I need only thank you for your letter and join very sincerely in your expressions of regret, while most fully admitting the permanent title of conviction to guide conduct, and assuring you that I never felt myself even tempted to impute to you the slightest trespass beyond the bounds of public duty.

It was the first rift in the lute, but it foreshadowed many a difference. The two men, though they were perhaps more nearly agreed on the main issues of politics than any of their leading contemporaries, were born to strike mutual sparks. Both were intellectual autocrats and intolerant of opposition, and temperamentally they were remote from each other. Harcourt to the end was sensible of Gladstone's moral

grandeur, but his high spirits were a little chilled by his senior's enormous seriousness. He loved the fun of the fight and could not restrain his gift of caricature, and his tendency to drive in his points with an exaggerated phrase offended the austere mind of Gladstone, whose excesses proceeded from the other extreme of an ingenious intellect so painfully concerned to be exact that it often gave the impression of a deliberate attempt to obscure the truth.

In the debate on the financial clauses of the Bill, Harcourt gave forcible expression to two themes which were always present to his mind—the unjust system of local taxation and the excessive expenditure on armaments. After paying a tribute to the financial genius of Gladstone, who had so rearranged the burdens of taxation as to make them as little felt as possible, and had thus incidentally removed one of the checks on expenditure, he said the state of local taxation was a disgrace to the country.

It was unequal in its incidence as regarded classes, and unfair in its incidence as regarded property. It was impossible to defend it on any principle of reason or justice. . . . We had carried our system of imperial taxation to great perfection, and swept away the whole of our financial rubbish under the bed of local taxation. . . . House rent was an article of first importance to the poor man. . . . It meant the decent comfort of his family, the health of his sons, the virtue of his daughters ; and it was upon this that they were going to place the heavy burden of a new tax. For the increased rate meant nothing but an enhanced house rent. He asked on what districts the tax would fall most heavily. On the East of London, on the slums of Liverpool, and places of that kind which had fewest schools, because they were least able to provide them. In these districts people would be unable to pay the school fees, and the rate would be further raised, the burden falling on the provident artisan.

The rate should be limited, and the remainder charged on the Imperial Exchequer. Money for the army and navy was not charged on local rates, and the hostile force of ignorance was actually present while the army and navy were increased against an invasion which he thought never would occur. The State of Massachusetts spent more on education than was spent by the British Empire. One-tenth of the money spent on fortifications (a vote of which members were probably ashamed) would have sufficed to cover the country with schools from one end to the other. . . .

He had looked into the Navy Estimates lately, and found that the

last ironclad which was built cost a sum about equal to the whole of the voluntary subscriptions for education. Having arrived at a point in the cost of engines of war when the expense of fitting up a school was about equal to the cost of a cannon, the House might fairly borrow from the First Lord of the Admiralty and the Minister of War as much money to relieve local taxation as was necessary to make this a workable Bill.

He reminded the House that the Birmingham League had indeed proposed that one-third of the cost of education should be borne by the rates, but that proposal was coupled with free education. They had never contemplated that the classes benefiting should pay in fees and in rates. It was right that some charge should be laid on local rates to ensure good local administration. He suggested that the limit might be one-sixth. He then moved an amendment to this effect, but was defeated by 176 to 21.

The Education Act of 1870 did not establish a complete and uniform system of education, but it did more than was contemplated by the Government when it was first introduced. This enlargement of its scope was largely due to the determined efforts of the friends of the Birmingham League who sat below the gangway, and to no one more than to Harcourt. It was very much more than a Bill to "complete the voluntary system and to fill up gaps," as it had been represented in the first instance. Education was not made free of fees as the Birmingham League had desired, but power was given to remit the fee in cases of extreme poverty. Neither was the desire of all advanced educationists that education should be uniformly compulsory attained, but a long step was taken in that direction by enabling the Boards to make by-laws under which attendance was compulsory.

While the struggle over the Education Bill was at its height Gladstone lost an able colleague, and Harcourt a close personal connection by the death of Lord Clarendon. He had filled a conspicuous place in the public life of the country since his mission to Spain in 1833 when he laid the foundations of the Quadruple Alliance. He had been thrice Foreign Minister, and when Gladstone formed his Government he had expressed the opinion, apropos of some opposi-

tion from the Queen, that he was the only living British statesman whose name carried any weight in the councils of Europe. He was a jovial, free-spoken man, wholly immersed in foreign politics and always a little alarmed about the advanced wing of the party and Harcourt's tendency to kick over the traces. Largely through his marriage with Clarendon's niece, Harcourt had been brought into the closest association with him, and though his intellectual debt to him was not of the nature of that which he owed to Cornewall Lewis, it was considerable, and on the personal side the loss was a heavy one.

III

It came at a critical moment in the affairs of Europe. Clarendon died on June 27, and on July 6 Lord Granville took over the seals of his office, to encounter the most sudden and unexpected storm that had swept over the Continent in living memory. The Franco-German War came like a bolt from the blue. On the afternoon of July 8, Hammond, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, told Granville that in all his long experience he had never known so great a lull in foreign affairs, and that he was not aware of any important question that he (Granville) would have to deal with. At six o'clock that evening Granville received a telegram informing him that the provisional Government of Spain had offered the Crown to Prince Leopold, a Catholic member of the house of Hohenzollern and of Leopold's acceptance of the offer. A week later France had declared war on Germany. The responsibility for the war is pretty evenly divided. On the one side, Bismarck certainly desired it as the instrument for unifying Germany. On the other side, the tottering Imperialism of France contemplated it as a means of recovering influence. The King of Prussia did not want it, and yielded to the French opposition to the Hohenzollern succession; but the preposterous de Gramont, the French Foreign Minister, intent on playing the rôle of Talleyrand, sought to convert the surrender of the King of Prussia into a public humiliation. He demanded through

the French Ambassador Benedetti that the King should bind himself for all future time not to consent to a Hohenzollern candidature, and sought the backing of the British Government in this gratuitous demand. In addition to this extension of the trouble, a despatch came from Paris asking for an apologetic letter from the King to the French Emperor. The King was naturally angry at the attempt to turn his pacific action into a French diplomatic victory, and told the French Ambassador at Ems that he would conduct future negotiations direct with Paris. He framed a telegram rejecting the new demand, and left it to Bismarck to decide whether the rejection should be communicated to the German Ambassadors and to the Press. Bismarck reduced the message by eliminating some words, gave it a more decisive form, and issued it to the world. There followed a night of agitation in Paris, and on July 15 the Emperor declared war.

Opinion in England at the time regarded France as the aggressor. The public distrust of Napoleon had fluctuated during his reign, but had never wholly subsided. No one had expressed a stronger detestation than Harcourt of the methods of corruption employed by Napoleon. He had in 1859 believed that war was inevitable, and had been an enthusiastic supporter of the Volunteer movement, and even of Palmerston's fortification scheme. His opinion had not altered now.

Speaking to his constituents in the autumn (October 18) during the progress of the war, he said :

> The Liberal party are of opinion that the war commenced by France is entirely unjust ; that France forced upon an unwilling people, upon a pretext which hardly pretended to be serious, a war that had no object but that of ambition and aggrandizement. The German people have met that menace in a spirit of fortitude that is truly admirable ; for they did not anticipate the wonderful success that they have since achieved. One of the causes for which war was undertaken was to prevent the national unity of Germany. . . . Now, one of the first results of the war has been the fall of the imperial system in France. . . . That Government rested on three principles. It may be said to have rested on a tripod ; it rested, first, upon ignorance, because it appealed not to the enlightened mind, but to the ignorance of France, for its support. Its

second support was corruption—corruption which was used without any reserve, and used at the expense of the nation. And its last and principal support was armed force—the army of France.

On August 2 he asked a question in the House of Commons which drew from Mr. Gladstone an important statement on the origin of the war. Harcourt asked for the production of the negotiations instituted by the late Lord Clarendon before the war to secure disarmament on the part of France and Prussia, and why Baron Brunnow's suggestion of a protocol to be drawn up by the Great Powers recognizing the withdrawal of the Hohenzollern candidature was not followed, and whether any attempt had been made to secure a combined remonstrance from the Great Powers against this unnecessary war.

As in the case of the Civil War in America, both belligerents proclaimed their grievances against the exercise of neutrality by this country, and " Historicus " once more laid down the law in *The Times* on the obligations of the neutral State. After stating the rules of neutrality, he pointed out that, where there was no blockade, " the sole duty of the neutral Government in respect of contraband trade carried on by its subjects is to be passive and not to interfere between them and the right of capture which the law of nations gives to the belligerents."

In the light of the European War of 1914–18, and the restrictions imposed by England on neutrals, it is important to record Harcourt's judgment on the position in 1870. He protested against the contention that neutrals were bound to prevent the export of contraband to either party, which was, he thought, both impolitic and impracticable, since in order to ensure anything of this kind it " would be necessary to establish a belligerent excise in every workshop and yard in the neutral country." The right of the capture of contraband was confined to the high seas. France and Prussia could trade in contraband with the neighbouring countries of Holland and Belgium without hindrance. This same consideration would, he said, make any blockade impracticable, since Prussia might as well be supplied through

Antwerp and Rotterdam as through Hamburg. We have lived to see a very different state of affairs in which it was found practicable to exercise a very efficient supervision of neutral trade with Prussia, both by sea and land.

Harcourt's generation would assuredly have been startled to see the power that resides nowadays with the Executive Government. In a letter to *The Times* (July 30) he lays down the theory of the source of the authority of a Royal Proclamation :

> A proclamation of the Crown can of its own force and virtue create no illegality as respects the subject. It rehearses and records ; it cannot make law. If it were otherwise the liberties of Englishmen would not be worth an hour's purchase. It is true that in certain cases the Legislature has conferred on the Crown power to forbid certain things by Proclamation or Order in Council, such as the export of munitions of war. But the power depends not on the Proclamation but on the Statute, and it is only exercised when war is anticipated with this country, and in defence of the interests of the Realm.

It is true that Harcourt was contemplating international affairs only, but the passage has a much wider application now, when Acts are passed by Parliament giving the widest limits to government by administrative order.

His sympathy with Germany did not prejudice his view of the law when it operated in favour of France. On August 1 he wrote to *The Times* on the question of whether coal should or should not be regarded as contraband. Prussia was disturbed at the suggestion that British ships might be supplying coal to the French fleet in the Baltic. That such provision was possible was due to the maritime superiority of France. As a neutral Great Britain must make no concession which would weaken her own vital interest in time of war. The advantages (he said) which France may now happen to enjoy by virtue of her powerful marine are engines of self-defence of which we may, we know not how soon, stand sorely in need. No country in the world is bound by anything like the interest which compels us, even in a situation of neutrality, to respect in others, in order that we

may maintain for ourselves, the unimpaired rights which belong to maritime superiority. To other nations these rights may be much; to us they are all.

IV

By the end of the Session of 1870 it had become apparent that Harcourt's support of the Government was qualified by an independence which was apt to be more formidable than the hostility of the Opposition. He had the fighting temperament, and was happier in disagreement than in agreement. He worked hard, and hit hard. Neither then nor at any time could he resist the temptation to let his gifts of wit and satire have full play, and he made enemies among his political friends as cheerfully as among his political foes. Like Scott's schoolmaster, who apologized to the boy for knocking him down by saying that he did not know his own strength, Harcourt hurt more than he knew and more than he intended. But he hurt without malice, and his essential good nature usually healed wounds that his hasty and impetuous temper had made. He showed little respect for the Front Bench, and "incidents" with his leaders were of frequent occurrence. Generally they ended happily enough. Thus we find W. E. Forster, whom he had fought with so much tenacity during the progress of the Education Bill, writing to him:

W. E. Forster to Harcourt.

80, Eccleston Square, *January* 20, 1871.—Few letters have ever given me more pleasure than your most kind note, but it has also given me some pangs of remorse, for I feel now that I have sometimes thought unjustly of you. However, in future we shall understand one another when we differ, and very likely differ less than we had expected.

And later, in the course of the conflict over the Abolition of Purchase in the Army, Sir John Coleridge, the Solicitor-General, wrote:

Sir J. Coleridge to Harcourt.

1, Sussex Square, *August* 16, 1871.—Your few words yesterday were most kind and I assure you touched me not a little. I believe I was very ill-tempered and unreasonable with you. But

indeed for the last month I have hardly been able to keep about and have never been so weak and ill from work in my life. . . . Pray forgive me if I said what you feel to require forgiveness. I felt it the more as now in many years we have never had an unkind word.

It is shabby to say sharp words in public and apologize in private; but the first time I speak and can find or make an opportunity I will say what I can to show my respect and regard for you and to set straight anything that is wrong. At my time of life I cannot readily afford to lose a friend.

It was not by any means the last of the tiffs with the Solicitor-General, for if Harcourt was critical of most of his leaders he was especially critical of the law officers. He pursued them with that abnormal industry and research which he had applied in the past to Seward and Fish, Napoleon and Derby and the rest of his multitudinous list of public opponents. After one of the numerous conflicts we find him stating his general attitude to the Government in a letter to Coleridge in the following terms:

Harcourt to Sir J. Coleridge.

Wednesday, December, 1872.—I am very anxious that our conversation of to-night (which I regard on your part as a very friendly one) should not be misunderstood as regards myself.

I am speaking not of course with respect to you but with regard to others when I say that I am very willing and should be glad to be regarded as a *friend*.

I am equally willing to be treated as a *foe* if that course is preferred. As the French say, "c'est à prendre ou à laisser." I am still young enough, ambitious enough—if you please, vain enough—to be indifferent to either fortune. Only I don't want you or others to suppose that antagonism, if there be antagonism, is of my making or seeking.

I should not have said so much only your good nature led me into saying more perhaps than I should have said, and I therefore wish that you should be under no misapprehension as to what I really meant. . . .

The "others" of whom he was speaking in this letter no doubt included the Prime Minister himself. Time was not improving the relation between Gladstone and Harcourt. A note of asperity became increasingly evident in the replies of Gladstone to the criticisms of his intractable follower. In the course of the debate on the Budget of 1871 he told

him that if his strictures on military expenditure were not extravagantly unjust, it was his duty to try to put an end to the Government. And later in the year a more sustained discord arose between the two statesmen in regard to the use of the Royal Prerogative for the abolition of the practice of purchasing commissions in the Army. This strong action had arisen out of the drastic army reforms introduced under the influence of the Franco-German War. Gladstone's proposal to abolish purchase had met with fierce hostility in the House of Lords, who saw in the scheme a menace to the aristocratic control of the Army. Gladstone had replied by announcing the abolition by Royal Warrant. This unusual procedure was an opportunity after Harcourt's own heart for the discussion of nice points of constitutional law, and he flung himself into the fight with a zest that brought him into violent conflict with the Solicitor-General and his Chief. He had supported the proposal in the first instance because he understood that it was a purely statutory execution of a power conferred on the Executive by Act of Parliament. But it appeared in the course of debate that the Solicitor-General based the Government's action on an obscure statute of Charles II asserting royal supremacy over the Army. There was much bandying of references and a heated personal explanation. In a speech made on August 15, Harcourt made a hit by saying, " They were entitled to call upon the owner of those two distinguished steeds, the Solicitor-General and the Attorney-General, to name the one by which he intended to win, whether by the Solicitor-General on Prerogative or the Attorney-General on Statute." The Solicitor-General had distinctly said that purchase was abolished by the prerogative of the Crown ; that the Crown was the sole governor and regulator of the Army, and that Parliament had nothing to do with it. " Why," said Harcourt, " Strafford died on the block and Clarendon was disgraced for pretending, the one and the other, that the Crown was the supreme governor and regulator of the Army." He proceeded with his historical doctrine down to the Revolution, the Bill of Rights and the annual Mutiny Act, and

declared that there had already been too much royal influence about the Army, and that the abolition of purchase would do something to get rid of it. But there had been no reason for introducing the "odious and detestable word Prerogative."

Gladstone replied with great acerbity. After commenting on "the historical readings without end" of Harcourt, he said, "To them (Harcourt and Fawcett) all things are clear and lucid, owing to the piercing characters of the intellects which they possess—so different from the dull brains of common men and official plodders."

No act of Gladstone's administration aroused more disquiet, not among his opponents, but among his friends, than this incident, and the venerable Earl Russell, now in retirement, wrote to Harcourt:

> Pembroke Lodge, *August* 17, 1871.—You must allow me to congratulate you on your progress in constitutional studies. Whatever you may think of the decay of statesmanship, I have deeply regretted the disappearance of constitutional lawyers, and I am happy to find from your late speeches and your admirable letter in *The Times* to-day, that the race is reviving.
>
> I disapprove strongly of the abuse of the prerogative in the issue of the Royal Warrant, and see very clearly that if the power had been used against some measure the House of Commons liked, instead of the Act of 1809, which they disliked, we should have heard much of the dispensing Power. I hope you will go on, and set right the facts imagined by our Ministers. They seem to me to be wanting in truth whenever they are obliged to answer on ministerial or constitutional points.

It was not easy at this time to fit Harcourt into any category. On the constitutional side he took his stand on the blessed Revolution of 1688, which had settled all things well. Ecclesiastically, he was the most uncompromising Erastian, to whom the Church was as much a department of State as the Local Government Board, and to whom the modern Anglican movement was only a pernicious reversion to Romanism. He was a modern Radical in his passion for peace, his hatred of war, his international outlook, his faith in the widest extension of self-government, and his

enlightened economic and financial convictions. But he cultivated little idealism. His temper was aristocratic and his tastes were of the eighteenth century. He loved the formalism of Pope's poetry and the rationalism of Walpole's politics. Mr. T. P. O'Connor once remarked to him that he would like to revisit the world a century after his death and see what changes had taken place. "I have quite an opposite wish," said Harcourt. "I would like to go back. I would like to have been a member of the Cabinet of Sir Robert Walpole." Harcourt had a genuine affection for the working classes, but an unconcealed dislike for the new commercial plutocracy, and on such subjects as the social status of women he was as uncompromising a reactionary as Dr. Johnson. Writing to Mrs. Henry Ponsonby, in answer to an appeal for his support in the promotion of the university training of women, he said:

Harcourt to Mrs. Ponsonby.

TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, *November* 23, 1871.—I am far too deeply committed to go back unless I am prepared like Cranmer (which I am not) to put my hand into the fire. I could not retract in the presence of this University the deep oaths I have sworn against "the higher education of woman." Even your influence cannot convince me. Have I not resisted to the death Lady Amberley who regards me as what Dizzy calls "one of the nincompoops of Politics." You will say why? That is just what I can't tell you. A man—even a lawyer and a Radical—must have some prejudices, and this is as respectable a one as another, perhaps more so. I am a country gentleman on this subject. You might just as well try to persuade him to kill foxes or not to preserve pheasants. I have an instinct, a sentiment, a passion, a prejudice—call it what you please. I don't profess to account for it. You might as well ask me why I am in love with one woman rather than another.

Don't believe that this arises from a disparaging idea or feeling about women. Nothing could be less true. No man has owed more to women or respects them more or has felt their influence more than I have. As to their education, God knows a pupil of Mons. Roche (Thérèse Harcourt was Roche's pupil) knows ten times more than ninety-nine out of 100 men who take their degrees in this place. But I do shrink from assimilating their status in any respect to that of men. It seems to me that their charm, their influence, their force depends so much on their dis-similarity—in modes of life, modes of action, modes of thought. I know I am not enlightened.

All my younger friends tell me so. Herbert, Dilke, etc., call me an "antiquated Radical of the poor old John Bright school." I believe it is quite true. I have none of the new lights, and am altogether behind the age. But don't be discouraged—you have plenty far better men than I on your side here who are working for your cause. . . .

I am greatly occupied about my Land Question which grows upon me in interest and importance. I have been much cheered by letters of approval from Gladstone (no very partial critic), but still more from Hastings, Russell (Duke of Bedford), dated from Woburn—does not it sound strange? I have told him if he thinks so, why does not he say so. People would listen to him who will pay no attention to the lackland ideologues of Greenwich and Oxford.

I had a charming letter from Dizzy, very flattering of course about everything *except land*, on which he advised me to say nothing in Parliament. . . .

V

The allusion to the land question relates to a new crusade on which he had embarked against the law's delays and the evils of the land system. In 1871 and 1872 he wrote to *The Times* an important series of letters on Law Reform. These letters are in amplification and explanation of an address which he gave in his capacity of President of the Jurisprudence Department of the Social Science Congress held at Leeds in October 1871. The address was afterwards issued in pamphlet form as a *Plan for the Amendment of the Law*, and embodies radical and far-reaching proposals, going beyond the conclusions reached by the Judicature Commission, which had then issued part of their report. He complained of the way in which the Inns of Court made use of their rich endowments, and suggested the termination by Act of Parliament of these "ropes of sand held together principally by dinners," and their reconstruction as a legal university. He sought a closer union between the two branches of the legal profession, remedies for the existing confusion in English statute law, and a reorganization of the superior courts. He even attacked the long vacation, which served, he declared, no real purpose except to protect "the monopoly, already sufficiently great, of a few principal practitioners." His iconoclasm extended to the office of the Lord Chancellor

himself, essentially a party politician and yet the head of a judicial system carefully guarded at other points from political influence.

Not content with this assault on his profession, Harcourt turned to the attack of the most sacred creed of his class. If the administration of the law was bad, the state of the land laws was worse. "To misuse and waste land is nothing else but to waste and misuse England. If a man has £50,000 a year in the Funds and chooses to dissipate it in riotous living he alone is the worse for it. The stock passes into other hands who know how to employ it better. . . . But if a man with £50,000 a year in land lets his property go to rack and ruin it is not he alone that suffers. The homesteads and the villages over 50,000 acres and the people who inhabit them suffer by his fault. The land is ill-farmed . . . the peasants are ill-housed, ill-paid, ill-taught, ill-fed." He did not want state ownership, nor peasant proprietorship; but he wanted the land set free to the play of economic influences by the destruction of the law of entail, which enabled the dead hand to tie it up and encumber and impoverish it by restrictions which played havoc with the interests of the community.

It will be said that the present system is necessary in order to keep up old families. I venture, however, to think that old families, if they are worth keeping up, will keep up themselves. And if they are not able to take care of themselves it is not for their advantage, certainly not for the advantage of the community, that the law should attempt to keep them up. A law framed with such an object is in the nature of a protective duty of the worst description.

In acknowledging a copy of the pamphlet on Law Reform which Harcourt had sent to him "as a slight acknowledgment of the public and private courtesy I have received at your hands," Disraeli said:

HUGHENDEN MANOR, *November* 7, 1871.—. . . I think it would be well for you to bring the whole subject before Parliament. Prigs and pedants depreciate the utility of our debates. For my own part, I am not ashamed to say, that I never seem thoroughly to understand a question, till it has been discussed in the House of Commons.

In such a motion, you would, of course, not treat of the land

laws, which require to be separately considered. My impression, in reading your address, was, that you had not sufficiently taken into account all the mitigations of the powers and consequences of the settlement of landed estates, which have accrued during the last quarter of a century ; but it is almost presumption in me to make this remark.

This interchange was but one incident of a personal relationship between Disraeli and Harcourt which was interrupted only by death. Harcourt's social friendships had little to do with his political affinities, and though he had been opposed to Disraeli on most public issues he was profoundly attracted by his bizarre personality and his cynical genius. Disraeli, on his side, was early sensible of Harcourt's political possibilities, and, as already said, had sought to enlist him on his side by the offer of a safe Welsh seat in 1866. The proposal was not entertained, but the friendly intercourse between the two continued, and in November 1872 Harcourt paid a visit to Disraeli and Lady Beaconsfield at Hughenden Manor, a record of which appears in the *My Reminiscences* by Lord Ronald Gower. It was after this visit that Harcourt wrote to Lady Beaconsfield a confession of petty larceny :

CAMBRIDGE, *November* 26, 1872.—I have all my life made efforts (apparently destined to be unsuccessful) to appear what Falstaff or is it Touchstone calls " moderate honest." But here I am actually a felon *malgré moi.*

Joseph's brother was not more alarmed and shocked than I was when on opening my sack the first thing I discovered in its mouth was the French novel you had provided for my entertainment in my charming bedroom at Hughenden. Whether the act was one of accidental larceny by my servant or whether it was insidiously effected by Lord J. Manners in order to ruin my public and private reputation I do not feel sure. I did however return it by this morning's post before I left London, and so I hope to be forgiven.

I have already taken measures to secure a consignment to you of Trinity Audit Ale. Delicious as it is I doubt whether there really exists anyone except a Cambridge man who can drink it with impunity. For the benefit of science, however, I hope the experiment will be made of administering a whole bottle of it one morning after breakfast to the " Page of the Peacocks " with a view of ascertaining its effects on his moral and physical nature. . . .

The gift was duly sent ; but the acknowledgment did not

come from Lady Beaconsfield. She died a few weeks later, and in answering a letter of condolence from Harcourt, Disraeli said:

> HUGHENDEN MANOR, *January* 9, 1872.—. . . She, whom I mourn, my inseparable, and ever-interesting companion for a moiety of my existence, had a genuine regard for you, and I saw you appreciated her happy disposition, and the constant, yet spontaneous, gaiety of her mind, which softened care, and heightened even joy.
>
> Yours was the last present she received. She was conscious of its arrival, and gratified by it; and mentioned your name with kindness.

VI

Meanwhile Harcourt had become engaged in another of those controversial battles in which he delighted and which he waged with such consuming energy. The Franco-German War had disturbed the public mind on the question of invasion and military security. It was under the stimulus of that disquiet that Cardwell, the War Secretary, Harcourt's colleague in the representation of Oxford, had carried through his Army reforms and established the short service system with its potentiality of reserves. In the public discussion which arose on the question of defence, Harcourt came forward as the protagonist of what afterwards came to be called the Blue Water School, and for eighteen months in Parliament, in the Press and on the platform he argued the case for a naval against a military policy—the case, that is, of defence against continental intervention—with inexhaustible fertility and vivacity. He began the campaign against "panic" measures in Parliament with an attack on Lowe, who, in introducing the Budget in April 1871, maintained that it could not be said of England any more than of France that her soil was safe from invasion, that the fleet might be decoyed away and that an Army sufficient for dealing with an invasion was necessary. Harcourt asked where the invasion was to come from. Was it expected from "that worn-out crater of an extinct volcano, France"? If from the Baltic, neither Prussia nor Russia had the marine necessary even for the transport of 50,000 men. But the

folly of invasion panic

core of his argument was that if the Government really believed in the danger of invasion it was their duty to increase the Navy, not the Army. The proposed increase of the Army by 20,000 men had no relevance to either of the policies before us—the policy of defence against invasion and the policy of intervention in continental warfare. "For the security of a defensive policy the Government," he declared, "asked too much; for a policy of European intervention their preparations were ridiculously and contemptibly inadequate."

He developed his Blue Water thesis at greater length in a paper read before the Royal United Service Institution in the May of the following year, and in the meantime had begun a prolonged discussion of the subject in the columns of *The Times*, which had attacked his New Year's speech at Oxford in which he had said:

> If you persist in increasing your expenditure at one time because you say wars are coming, and at another because they are over, what hope is there of any pause in this descent into the bottomless pit of an ever-increasing extravagance?

The question was whether we stood for a policy of defence or of aggression. It was by virtue of possessing the most powerful navy in the world that our voice would be heard in the counsels of Europe, but if our land forces were to be organized on a footing for continental action the military estimates must be enormously increased. In a long letter (January 16, 1872) he deals with the various invasion scares which had disturbed this country from the time of Napoleon onwards. He pointed out that Napoleon had realized that a temporary command of the sea was useless for the purpose of invasion; such a command must be permanent, so as to ensure the inviolability of the invader's communications. No theory of the possibility of "decoying away" the Navy would meet this condition. Why did not Napoleon in 1803 throw on these shores an army of 100,000 men when we had only an army of 60,000 men? The answer was to be found in the epigrammatic remark of the third Napoleon on his

Uncle's enterprise, "a maritime expedition without a maritime superiority is a contradiction in terms." Harcourt showed what an enormous flotilla of transports was required for the small expedition to Abyssinia, but it was the case of the transfer of the Anglo-French armies to the Crimea which gave him the material for the most overwhelming case against the possibility of invasion in the face of a dominant fleet. "The invasion panic," he went on to say, "I do not fear. Of the 'continental obligation' panic, I confess, I am mortally afraid."

His fear was well founded. The country had narrowly escaped being drawn into the Franco-German conflict on the subject of Belgium. On the eve of the war, Bismarck had disclosed in *The Times* the fact that in 1867 Napoleon had sought to make a "deal" with Prussia of a peculiarly odious kind. The treaty he projected provided that Prussia was to be allowed to absorb the South German States, while France was to be allowed to annex Belgium. Bismarck had other views as to how to consolidate Germany, but he kept the proposal and published it at his own moment. The revelation created great alarm in this country, and the Government submitted a proposal to the belligerents by which the immunity of Belgian soil already secured by treaty was fortified by special agreement for the period of war, Great Britain engaging, in the event of the violation of the neutrality of Belgium by either belligerent, to co-operate with the other in its defence. It was the breach of Belgian integrity forty-six years later by Germany that involved this country in the European War. On the question of these continental obligations Harcourt took his stand by Bright. In the House of Commons (March 11, 1872) he said:

> Treaties of guarantee embody all the vices of the law of entail and mortmain. I would not advocate the repudiation of existing guarantees, but I entirely deny the right of one generation to pledge the fortune, the reputation and, it may be, the very existence of its successors by obligations of which it can by no possibility be a judge as to the power of posterity to fulfil. . . . It is as impossible for England to become a military power on the Continent as it is for

> Switzerland to become a naval power. . . . In the case of the Belgian treaty we might have to meet the combined armies of France and Germany, perhaps 1,000,000 men. People speak of garrisoning Antwerp; we might as well talk of defending France by garrisoning Brest or Cherbourg. . . . We should make it honestly understood in Europe that England is not a military, but a naval power.

Time has made its own tremendous comment on this utterance. In the light of that comment it will seem in some respects singularly wide of the mark. Harcourt had not realized, any more than anyone else at the time had realized, that the organization of an army on the continental scale was, given the command of the sea and the control of mechanical production, a thing that could be improvised in a few months. But the essential argument that underlies the whole case that Harcourt presented still stands, and has been strengthened by the experience of the war. Invasion is impossible so long as we command the sea, and the true policy of defence is not a great army, but a sufficient navy. In Chatham's phrase, the fleet is the standing army of England.

It was one of the defects of Harcourt's ebullient spirit and love of disputation that he fanned his indignation so excessively, and enjoyed it so much that he led duller minds to suspect that his passion was all make-believe. This was unjust. The passion was quite sincere, but the artist in him could rarely resist the temptation to overplay his part. It was so in regard to the great Battle of the Parks that he fought with such enormous zest from February 1872 to the spring of the following year. He enjoyed the fight, I think, because it was a fight, and he enjoyed it none the less because it enabled him to scourge the Government of which he was a nominal supporter and to lash the leaders of whom he was supposed to be a follower. But the issue he raised was a real one, and the victory he won was a genuine benefaction to the public. Ayrton, the Commissioner of Works, had promoted a Bill for the regulation of the royal parks, which gave the Ranger, who was a nominee of the Crown, the right

of framing new rules for the conduct of the public in the parks and the keepers extraordinary power of enforcing them, including arrest without the issue of a warrant. Among the new regulations was a clause which reduced the liberty of public speech in the parks to the narrowest limits. Harcourt attacked the proposal as a scheme for depriving the people of air and space as well as of rights of speech. It was "Algerine legislation," in which a Liberal Government was the vehicle of Conservative aims:

> The law with regard to our parks was different from that of any country in the world, because it excluded from them all but carriage folk. (No, no.) Yes; no carriage but a private one was allowed to enter the parks, but in Paris there was no restriction on any person driving upon the Champs Élysées or the Bois de Boulogne; and there was no despotic country in the world where people who had not a carriage of their own were refused access to the parks. (*February* 12, 1872.)

He quoted a Conservative journal as having said that the Bill was to get rid of "that loathsome and disorderly crew who may be seen any afternoon disporting themselves like Yahoos in St. James's Park," and took this as the clue to the policy of popular exclusion. A corner of the Thames Embankment was not to be given to the people. In Epping Forest, in the New Forest, wherever there was a chance of the people getting a little air and space, he and a few of his friends had to fight a battle against a Liberal administration. He expressed a malicious pleasure when Gladstone and Disraeli had a fierce passage over the subject, and "offered a few words of mediation between such great allies" now that their grand alliance "seemed to be broken up." His own proposal was that the regulation of the parks should be left to the police. If that were done the breach between the great chiefs could be healed and they might again "kiss and be friends."

The core of the disagreement between Gladstone and Harcourt was public right *v.* Crown right. Gladstone agreed that the people should hold meetings in the Park, as otherwise they would have to hold them in the town to the

inconvenience of the rest of the public, but he was against the statutory right of meeting. In the end Harcourt and the other critics got modifications in the Bill which met their case, and the rules were withdrawn. However, during the Recess, new rules which had not been approved by the House were issued, and under them a group of men were prosecuted in November in connection with a meeting in Hyde Park. Thereupon the storm broke out with redoubled fury. Harcourt was at Trinity College, but he thundered in *The Times*, and carried on agitation in private. To Dilke he writes :

Harcourt to Dilke.

CAMBRIDGE, 1872.—The issuing of the Rules in the Recess is a gross breach of faith. I don't know whether I told you that in July Ayrton gave me a copy of the Rules (substantially the same as the present). I showed them to Forster who professed to be shocked and disgusted at them. They were quashed by the Cabinet and at F.'s instance. I allowed the matter therefore to drop instead of as I intended bringing it before the House of Commons. The Rules being thus withdrawn when Parliament was sitting are reproduced as soon as it rises.

I have written to Forster on the subject. The matter is a delicate one as so much of it passed in private, but I must wait till I hear from F. and see what happens on the summonses on Monday.

A few days later he writes again to Dilke :

I have sent a second letter to *The Times* setting forth a *semi*-legal view against the Rules, but I fear it is not water-tight. Nevertheless the Rules are done for and Ayrton too, whatever becomes of the legal decision. I have a letter from Lord Russell in a great state of exultation at the row. He says "there never was a Government towards which distrust was more justifiable and of all its members Ayrton is the least trustworthy." Don't you think something might be done in the way of getting up big petitions all over London for the removal of Ayrton. If a few hundred thousand signatures were got and sent in to Gladstone it would have a good effect.

The Hyde Park case went to appeal, and the Court affirmed the conviction ; but the agitation which Harcourt, Peter Rylands, Dilke and others carried on during the winter had its reward. When Parliament met new rules were laid on the table by the Home Secretary. The rules admitted

the right of delivering public addresses in Hyde Park without any previous formalities, so long as they were held within certain limits. With this concession Harcourt practically withdrew any imputation he might have made on the good faith of the Government. He had won a conspicuous victory, and was disposed to be quite amiable, even to Ayrton.

In another case Harcourt had a complete and deserved victory. The old question of the Crown rights in regard to the reclaimed land at the western end of the Thames Embankment was revived and embodied by Lowe in a Bill. Harcourt, standing for the public rights in the matter, moved its rejection and secured its defeat.

He was less successful in two other directions during the Session. They were directions in which he had always been out of the modern current of Liberalism and was entirely unrepentant. Even when arguing for reform in the Cambridge Union he had opposed the ballot, and on the introduction of the Bill of 1872 he showed no sympathy with the measure, though he took an active part in modifying its clauses. Harcourt only differed from the majority in expressing his dislike of a Bill which had few enthusiastic friends. "It became law," says the *Annual Register* of that year, "in spite of the all but unanimous hostility of the House of Lords, the secret disapproval of the House of Commons and the indifference of the general community." And no Act ever passed probably had a more unchallenged success in operation. The same may almost be said of Bruce's famous Licensing Act of the same year which among other things put an end to the scandal of the unlimited hours of the public-houses. Thousands of poor women in the land had reason to bless a measure that sent their husbands home at some time before the morning. Harcourt, however, would have no terms with what he regarded as an interference with personal liberty, and in his speech (December 30, 1872) to his constituents at the Oxford Town Hall, after his colleague, Cardwell, had given his blessing to the Act, he denounced it with uncompromisng

vigour. In the midst of an eloquent and generally sound plea for liberty, he said:

> We no longer prescribe the course of trade by Act of Parliament, but it seems we are to establish protective prohibitory duties upon the habits of the people. We have removed religious tests and now we are to have Thirty-nine Articles for the Tavern. The policy of the Liberal party has been for generations a policy of emancipation from restriction and if it is now to begin to forge fresh fetters for the free I will have nothing to say to such a perversion. . . . I don't admire a grand-maternal Government which ties nightcaps on a grown-up nation by Act of Parliament. I am against putting people to bed who want to sit up. I am against forbidding a man to have a glass of beer if he wants a glass of beer. I am against public-house restriction and park regulations. I don't approve Mr. Ayrton making it a misdemeanour to use soap in bathing. I am against sending people to prison for disclosing their votes. . . .

It is good boisterous fun, but it reads a little hollow to-day, and the author of the Local Option Bill came in time to see how hollow it was.

CHAPTER XII

IN OFFICE

Social Life—Lady Waldegrave—Log of the *Loulou*—Law of Entail—Irish Universities Bill—Friendship with Disraeli—The *Alabama* Arbitration—The Trade Unions—Gas-Workers' Strike—The Law of Conspiracy—Harcourt Solicitor-General—Objection to Knighthood—Economy and the Estimates.

IN 1870 Harcourt had lost the most cherished link with his undergraduate days through the death of Julian Fane, and in the following year he sustained another heavy personal bereavement. His father, who had spent the last ten years of his life in the pursuit of his scientific studies at Nuneham, died at an advanced age, leaving his elder son Edward to succeed to the estates. The political differences between the two brothers did not interrupt their friendly intercourse. They sat on opposite sides of the House, after 1878, the elder then representing the County of Oxfordshire in the Conservative interest; but, in spite of the note of ostracism struck by Edward at the time of his brother's election for Oxford City, he remained on cordial personal terms with him, was obviously proud of his achievements, and never failed to consult him on business affairs affecting Nuneham and questions such as the family settlements upon the sisters. Harcourt's own life in these years, as will have been apparent from what has gone before, had been extraordinarily full. Few men had touched the public affairs of the time at more points or flung themselves into the current of controversy with more enjoyment. His political work, vast as it was in bulk, only represented one

phase of his many-sided activities. His work at the Parliamentary Bar was increasing, and he carried out his duties at Cambridge with the whole-hearted enthusiasm that he seemed able, from his abundant resources, to put into any task that he undertook. Fortunately the delicacy of constitution with which he began life had disappeared, though he had not yet assumed those Falstaffian proportions which marked him in later years and were the delight of the caricaturists. Apart from an attack of scarlet fever in the beginning of 1872, he had enjoyed good health, and he took his pleasures with the same high spirits that he took his work and his innumerable combats.

The chief of those pleasures centred around the son who embodied the memories of his brief domestic happiness. Wherever he went Loulou went with him, and the child became the petted associate of half the public men of the time. In two homes the father and son were especially welcome. Through Cornewall Lewis, Harcourt had become an intimate friend of Lord and Lady de Grey (afterwards the Marquis and Marchioness of Ripon), and on the death of Mrs. Harcourt the latter took a maternal interest in father and son. Lady Ripon was one of the most remarkable women of her generation. Afflicted for many years by a disfiguring ailment, she appeared little in the public eye, but privately she exercised a powerful influence upon many public men in the Liberal party, notably Harcourt, G. J. (afterwards Lord) Goschen and W. E. Forster. She held very advanced views, and applied to all issues a singularly rigorous and clearly defined code of principles, and until she left England in 1880 on the appointment of her husband as Viceroy of India no one was more constantly consulted by Harcourt on public affairs than she was. He did not always act on her advice—for example, she was later strongly opposed to his support of a Hartington leadership against Gladstone—but much that he did owed its inspiration to her counsel. Her kindness was not merely political. From his earliest years she largely took charge of Harcourt's son, who found a second home in her household both in London

and at Studley Royal, the family seat in Yorkshire, where he spent many of his holidays.

Another household in which Harcourt was a constant visitor in these years was that of the Countess Waldegrave. After the death of her third husband, George Granville Harcourt, she had married Chichester-Fortescue (afterwards Lord Carlingford), a high-minded if not very distinguished politician who had filled the post of Chief Secretary during Gladstone's first Irish legislative period and then succeeded Bright at the Board of Trade. On leaving Nuneham the Countess had resumed her residence at Horace Walpole's villa at Twickenham, Strawberry Hill, and here, in the strange confection of sham Gothic that Walpole had created, and to which she largely added, she set up the most famous political *salon* of the period. With the disappearance of Lady Palmerston from the stage, she became the leading hostess of the Liberal party, and the week-end gatherings at Strawberry Hill, where the Saturday night dinner party not infrequently numbered fifty guests, became an important factor in the political life of the time. To her table came all the brightest wits and sharpest tongues of the period, but the most constant member of her *entourage* was Harcourt, for whom from the Nuneham days she had conceived a great friendship, whose marriage she had done much to make possible and in whose political career she took an interest second only to that of her husband.

Lady Harcourt, who remembers the generous hospitality of Strawberry Hill, has sent me some of her recollections. She writes:

> Sant, the artist, adorned the walls of the long room built in imitation of the one at Nuneham, with portraits of fair ladies, statesmen, diplomatists, a somewhat flamboyant presentment of the hostess leaning out of a bower of roses holding pride of place on the walls. Guests pouring in at all times and seasons were received not only by the hostess, but met by Miss Braham, Lady Waldegrave's niece (now Lady Strachie), who sorted out, combined a shifting mass of nationalities with different aims, different opinions, different wishes, with a tact and gentleness which all admired and some still remember. There came many ambassadors and envoys, there came important Liberal statesmen, not all congenial spirits, and the ways for these

were not always paths of pleasantness. There came selections of relatives from former marriages, whose exact kinship to the hostess it was difficult to unravel, but who mixed more or less harmoniously with the crowd.

There was Lady Molesworth, noisy and good humoured, who wondered if one *could* know anybody living on the wrong side of Oxford Street, and who, advised of a more moderate dressmaker than her own, asked doubtfully, " Do you think cheap gowns succeed ? " She herself lived in Eaton Place where she entertained carefully and successfully. Mr. A. Hayward, the well-known essayist, diner-out, raconteur, an habitué of both ladies' houses, notes in his *Selected Essays* an amateur performance at Lady Molesworth's of Alfred de Musset's *Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée* before a distinguished audience comprising both French and English royalty. There was Mrs. Cornwallis West in the hey-day of her youth and beauty, singing Irish songs and brimming over with animal spirits. There was Bernal Osborne, intensely witty and amusing as long as he could provide himself with a butt whose sufferings he enjoyed, although the victim writhed. All this within the natural everyday setting of house, garden, grounds. Set balls, set festivities came at intervals, when perhaps masked figures and fancy dress enriched the summer night.

A great feature of that world was association with the Orleans princes and their families—the Duc d'Aumale, the Comte de Paris, the Duc de Chartres, who enlivened their exile with other revels —dinners at Orleans House near by, fêtes then called " breakfasts," beginning with a fancy fair of booths with contents to tempt the unwary and ending with dance and supper. The Duc d'Aumale, brilliant in conversation, courtly in manners, a lover of literature although a soldier, was a stately figure, and to Strawberry Hill and its mistress a loyal friend.

Of course neither then nor at any time was there any one society. Great ladies were certainly a law unto themselves, and allowed access to their inner circle on conditions framed entirely without trace of constitutional right—a despotism tempered only by their smiles. There was another set more amiable but still holding aloof from Strawberry Hill by virtue of old tradition—one tradition being oddly enough that of the breakfast table, only some accidental condition of health being allowed to interfere between hostess and guests at that well-spread board, to which ladies came attired in what now seems the strange array of silk gowns and short kid gloves. But at Strawberry Hill all broke their fast when and where they pleased ; neither hostess nor lady guests usually appearing until a later period in the day.

The joyous life, of which this is a poor description, went on season after season, but the end was sudden, tragic. Lady Waldegrave died unexpectedly on July 15, 1879, after a few days' illness.

Unsettled affairs demanded prompt action. To the less intimate part of the social world all came like the fall of the curtain after a successful comedy ; no sound of speech, no echo of gay song broke the utter stillness.

Friends mourned truly and deeply, grateful for past kind deeds, sorrowing for valued companionship. To the one chief mourner, her husband, the light of life went out, nor was it ever rekindled in the sad days that remained to him.

For his main recreation in these strenuous years Harcourt still went to Scotland, staying sometimes with the Duke of Sutherland at Dunrobin Castle, at other times with the Duke of Argyll at Inverary, the Mintos at Hawick, Sir John Fowler, or Millais. Occasionally he exchanged shooting for yachting, as in 1872 when he bought a small schooner of 15 tons which he christened the *Loulou*, in which he cruised during the autumn with his son, aged nine, and a crew of two. Of this adventure, Harcourt wrote a comic fragment of history, a log of the *Loulou*, and the late Lord Harcourt supplied me with the following reminiscences :

There was one small cabin which served us as saloon and sleeping quarters, with a small hatch opening to the fo'castle through which our food (of a primitive character) was handed.

One night we anchored in the Bay of Glenelg—N. of Sound of Sleat—in calm weather. In the night it blew a gale from the S.W. and the *Loulou* was blown ashore on the shingle. We scrambled out on to the beach, went to the inn at 2 a.m., could make no one hear, so opened a window and occupied an empty room for the night, to the great dismay of a maid-servant who found us in the morning.

We got the yacht off the shore that day, apparently undamaged, and dredged for our lost anchor and cable, which we recovered. Later in the same autumn we crossed the Minch—north of Skye —for Harris, to stay with Lord and Lady Ripon, who were living at Lord Dunmore's, Fincastle, N. Harris.

On the way over we sprang a leak in a heavy wind, and the crew of two, W. V. H., and I were pumping all night to keep her afloat.

When we reached East Tarbet, Harris, in the morning, she was down to the deck line, and to prevent her from sinking we ran her ashore on some sand at low water. We then went on to the Ripons.

Later the *Loulou* was repaired and refloated and taken back to Kyle Akin, but, being discovered to be thoroughly rotten, she was abandoned there and subsequently looted and broken up by the inhabitants without protest by W. V. H.

It was during one of these visits to Scotland that Harcourt

was seized with a new passion. The game of lawn tennis had just become the popular novelty in outdoor games, and Millais in his autumn holiday at Erigmore had taken it up with boyish enthusiasm.

He was quite fierce in his determination to master the game (writes J. G. Millais in the *Life* of his father), the more so as we were expecting visitors who probably knew something of it already. They came at last—Sir William Harcourt, Sir Henry James, and my uncle George Stibbard—and were so taken with the game that they too must become proficient, or perish in the attempt. In deadly earnest, then, they set to work. The balls flew about in the most lively and erratic way, and, as to the rules, nobody knew exactly what they meant, and nobody cared so long as his interpretation was upheld. The thing was to get this interpretation accepted by the adversaries, and to this end the game was stopped again and again, until one or other of the opponents gave way. Never was heard such an array of arguments as a disputed "fault" would draw forth from that able lawyer, Lord James, or such a torrent of eloquence as the great leader of the Liberal party let fall now and again in imploring his host and partner to keep clear of that "horrid net," and never did the host himself go to work in more fiery mood than at this new plaything that had caught his fancy. For hours together the game went on in this absurd fashion, the genial banter of the combatants keeping us all in fits of laughter as we sat and watched the performance.

In the meantime, largely at the instance of Lady Ripon, Harcourt had consented to a separation from his son, who was sent to a private school at Eastbourne, more with a view to his health than his education. The first news from thence Harcourt conveys to Dilke in the following note early in 1873.

Loulou is overcome with joy and gratitude at the stamps. He has only been at school a fortnight, and has been elected by the boys (apparently a purely democratic performance) to be "head of the War Office," a mysterious office of a *Vehmgericht* character which determines who shall fight and is generally a sort of Prime Ministership of the school—having no relation, I am happy to say, to acquirements of any description. You may imagine how delighted I am that he should be the popular leader at once—*Voilà qui marche*. . . .

A few scraps from his correspondence at this time will give the flavour of his intercourse with his friends of the other sex. Writing to Mrs. Ponsonby (May 1876), he says:

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *Sunday evening.*—. . . You read the *Examiner*, don't you? It is the organ of the enlightened philosophers. Will you be good enough to look at a poem in that of May 17 called "Dirae or the Saviour of Society" by Swinburne? Will you teach it to your daughter? Will you even read it aloud to me? That is the sort of argument I like. It is short, compendious, unanswerable. Depend upon it, we learn more from our children than they do from us. That is the use of having them. You know the saying, *Tous les préjugés sont respectables.* Permit me to add, *Toutes les philosophies sont détestables.*

To Lady Dilke he writes:

1873. . . . My wretched memory conveyed to you an imperfect version of the lines which you so much appreciated. I send you the correct card. They are from the "Progress of Man" in the *Anti-Jacobin.*

> Of Whist or Cribbage mark the amusing game,
> The partners changing but the sport the same;
> Else would the Gamester's anxious ardour cool,
> Dull every deal and stagnate every pool—
> Yet must one man with one unceasing wife
> Play the long rubber of connubial life.

Remember this in the long evenings of double dummy.

Referring to the death of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, he says in a letter to Mrs. Ponsonby (July 1873):

. . . Alas for our poor Bishop. He was a finished Philistine. Did you ever hear the story of Bright taking him by the lappel of his purple coat and saying, "Bishop, is this the proper thing, purple and fine linen?" to which he replied, "No, Mr. Bright, it is meant to show you that the Church should always be *inviolate.*" He always seemed to me to have had a splendid nature debauched by society—or just *an angel who had been too much about town.* He was an unhappy man, but happy in dying without knowing it. How much to be wished I think by all in spite of the Litany! It will be a great shock to Granville who has a tender heart, and especially to Gladstone who is always meditating a *retraite* and is like the Trappist digging his own grave—barring the silence. . . .

II

With the close of the session of 1872, the Gladstone Ministry had shot its bolt. It had achieved an unequalled record of first-class legislation, but its popularity had largely disappeared, and the seeds of internal disruption were abundantly present. Not the least of its afflictions was the group

of brilliant but equivocal supporters below the gangway, Harcourt, Fawcett, Dilke, Lord E. Fitzmaurice, and Henry James, all of whom, and chiefly Harcourt, had been liberal in inflicting the faithful wounds of friendship. In his customary New Year's speech at Oxford on January 1, 1873, he was less critical of his leaders than he had been in the speech on the Bruce Act two years before. He devoted himself mainly to the position of agriculture and to the subject of agricultural wages, developing the attack on the law of entail which he had made at the Social Science Congress, and showing how that mischievous custom encumbered the owner, impoverished the soil, and prevented the farmers from putting capital into their farms. Another hindrance to production was the excess of ground game:

> What would you think (he said) if, when a corn factor leased premises for his trade, his landlord required that he should always keep a few hundred rats in his granary? But the rats would not be more injurious in the granary than are hares and rabbits among the crops. What would you think if a dairyman were compelled to keep a stock of cats among the cream? Or the butchers to keep a constant supply of flies among the meat?

Writing to Spencer Butler who, following those speeches, had sent him "a plea in favour of the silver shrines of the real property law," Harcourt bade him have no fear. "It is as little likely that there will be any substantial Land Reform undertaken by the present Government, or the present Parliament, as that I shall be S.-G. (Solicitor-General). The great motto in life is *patience*. I don't expect we shall do any more good till we have had the fallow of a short Tory Government to clear the ground. Then something may be accomplished by the next Liberal administration." And a few days later, in answer to another letter from Butler, he says:

> Stratford Place, *Saturday*.—What I practically want is that tenants for life should not be hampered or limited in charging or borrowing, or selling for the sake of the improvement of the estate. This is the real evil which to a certain degree retards improved cultivation. How can a man who has six children, and who knows the estate is all to go to the eldest son, lay out on the land the money

he might save. He must keep it for the younger children, or they will starve. This was the case at Nuneham. The power of charging under the entail had been long ago exhausted. My father was obliged to save all he could, and therefore could not improve the estate. This is the real mischief. Is not the practical remedy to give to tenant for life all the power for *the purpose of improvement of the soil* (*and for no other*) which owners in fee would have.

As you know, tenant for life now, if he borrows must pay 7 per cent. to replace capital in twenty-five years. Whereas he might borrow as owner in fee at 4 or 4½ per cent. This is done to protect the inheritance, but in fact the growing wealth of the country is the true protection of the inheritance.

If you lay out £10 an acre to-day, you may be sure, whatever becomes of your improvement (whether it is worn out or not) the land itself will be worth £10 more twenty-five years hence. So the protection is really superfluous.

Tell me how you can free *tenant for life* completely for *land improvement purposes only*, and leave him tied up not to waste the estate for gambling, racing and other things. You need never fear a man being a spendthrift on improvements.

The new Session opened with a formal attack by Harcourt on the question of public expenditure. In a speech of weighty criticism he moved a resolution (February 18) couched in the historic formula that the national expenditure has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished. No sooner, however, had Jacob Bright, who seconded the motion, sat down than Gladstone rose and took the sting out of the attack by offering a Select Committee to consider the state of the public expenditure, and on this compromise, which Harcourt accepted while expressing doubt as to whether it would serve the cause of public economy, the motion was withdrawn. A few weeks later, however, the Government were on the rocks. Not for the first or the last time it was Ireland that brought about disaster. Having disestablished the Irish Church and established the principle of tenant right in the improvement of the soil, Gladstone attacked the third branch of what he had called the upas tree of poisonous ascendancy in Ireland. For years the grievance of the Catholics on the subject of university education had perplexed successive Governments, but no solution had been found. Gladstone sought to remove it by the

Irish Universities Bill, which proposed to set up a new university in Dublin in which there were to be no religious tests either for teachers or taught, and in which there was to be no university teacher in theology, modern history, or moral and mental philosophy. The separate affiliated colleges might make arrangements for those subjects, but the new university would not teach them directly and authoritatively. It was a compromise. It aimed at meeting the grievance of Catholic Ireland without offending the prejudices of Protestant England. Gladstone's speech in introducing it " threw the House into a mesmeric trance," and if the fate of the Bill could have been settled offhand he would have carried his measure.

But as the debate proceeded opposition grew, and though Cardinal Manning had urged acceptance, the Irish hierarchy rejected the measure as the endowment of " non-Catholic and godless colleges." On March 10 Harcourt opened the discussion by a speech in advance of any he had yet delivered in its effect upon the House. Severe in criticism of detail, he was favourable to the substance of the Bill. He supported it in the hope that it might be made tolerable in Committee, but he described the clauses which excluded theology, philosophy, and modern history from the curriculum of the new university as " the most hideous deformity ever laid by an English Government on the table of the House." He considered the whole scheme faulty, but he thought that the danger of handing over the Government to Disraeli was greater than any danger to be feared from the Bill. The vote was taken the following night, when Disraeli spoke till midnight and Gladstone followed him for two hours. At two in the morning the Government were defeated by three votes, and Gladstone resigned. But Disraeli refused to take office without a dissolution, and after some days of negotiation Gladstone resumed power. His troubles, however, continued to accumulate. The discovery that a sum of £800,000 had been irregularly detained on its way to the Exchequer and applied to the service of the telegraphs led to the enforced retirement of Lowe from the Treasury, Monsell from the

Post Office, and Ayrton from the Board of Works, all having been involved in this gross impropriety.

III

Harcourt's declaration that he would rather have a Bill for which he had no enthusiasm than run the risk of a Government of which Disraeli would be the head did not indicate any change of attitude in the personal relations of the two men. Indeed they were at this time in cordial correspondence on a question to which it is necessary to return once more, and finally. The long struggle over the *Alabama* claims had at last come to an end. It had been bitter and menacing throughout, and never more menacing than in its last phase. Gladstone had taken up the thorny problem where Disraeli had left it. As a preliminary a new Foreign Enlistment Act, based on the recommendation of the Royal Commission of 1868, was passed, by which, among other things, it was made an offence to build a ship with reasonable cause to believe that it would be employed in the service of a foreign state at war with a friendly state. Harcourt declared this Act to be " the best and most complete law for the enforcement of neutrality in any country." Following on this, Gladstone in 1871 sent a Commission headed by Lord de Grey (Marquis of Ripon) to Washington to arrange a treaty of arbitration in regard to the outstanding issues between the two countries. The negotiations were extraordinarily difficult, and they were complicated by an amazing memorandum by Sumner to Fish in which he suggested that as Fenianism in the United States was excited by the proximity of the British flag in Canada, that flag should be withdrawn from the whole American hemisphere, including the islands. Fish, never behindhand in extreme proposals, added his own modest hint that the cession of Canada might end the trouble. The real struggle, however, was as to the rules to be laid down for the arbitrators. Certain of the rules proposed by the United States had not been established when England's alleged breaches of neutral obligation had been committed. Those breaches

had been breaches not of international law, but of English municipal law, and it was necessary to make the new rules retro-active in order to bring those breaches within the scope of an international tribunal. This, however, was conceded, the treaty was signed, and the Geneva arbitration tribunal, consisting of five members named by Great Britain, the United States, Switzerland, Italy, and Brazil, was agreed upon. At last all the danger-points seemed to have been passed.

But before the meeting of the tribunal the whole controversy flared up again with astonishing violence. The claim put in by the United States to the arbitrators was not limited to the depredations of the *Alabama*, the *Florida*, and the *Shenandoah*. It represented the full original demands of Sumner, all the losses, individual, national, direct, indirect, constructive, material, that could by the most liberal interpretation be attributed to the activities of the vessels. It was not a matter of millions ; it was a matter of hundreds of millions. Gladstone was horrified. "We must be insane," he said, "to accede to demands which no nation with a spark of honour or spirit left could submit to even at the point of death." For months the new conflict waxed hot and hotter, and when the arbitrators met at Geneva in June 1872 it seemed that they had only met to break up, and Cockburn, the Lord Chief Justice, who did not believe in the arbitration though he had been chosen as the English representative, was satisfied that all was well over. He proposed an adjournment for eight months. Happily there was a wiser man there. Adams, the United States representative, saved the situation by an act of courage and statesmanship which is the supreme witness of that distinguished man's wisdom. In disregard of the position taken up by his own Government, he arranged with his colleagues on the tribunal to make a spontaneous declaration that the American Government would not press the indirect claims. It was a daring and brilliant outflanking movement. It left the diplomatists at home *en l'air* and the tribunal master of the field. The court set to work forthwith, and in Sep-

tember gave its award, unanimous in the case of the *Alabama*, not quite unanimous in the other cases. England was called upon to pay a gross sum of three and a quarter millions, and the world was enriched with the most splendid precedent in all its history for the pacific settlement of international differences.

Harcourt rejoiced in the settlement of the great controversy in which his pen had played so large a part. He had always been a friend of arbitration, believing "that it was for the highest interests of civilization that the rule of reason and justice should be substituted for the barbarism of war." But, like other jurists, both English and American, he was disquieted by the interpretation placed by the Geneva tribunal on the rules embodied in the Washington Treaty. There were discrepancies between the Foreign Enlistment Act and the rules which might lead to serious difficulties, supposing one belligerent demanded a judgment in our prize court on the basis of the Act and the other on the basis of the rules. The effect of the new doctrines as interpreted at Geneva would be to make neutrality impossible, and in the war of the future every nation would find it necessary to range itself on one side or the other. He was especially alarmed about the second rule, designed "not to permit or suffer either belligerent to make use of its (the neutral's) ports or waters as the basis of naval operations against the other, or for the purpose of the renewal of military supplies or arms, or the recruitment of men." This, Harcourt held, was extremely ambiguous, and was published at a moment when we were engaged in controversy with Germany with reference to our dealings with France in munitions of war. If that rule was literally accepted the Germans had won their case. The Award interpreted this rule to the effect that the supply of coal in limited quantities converted a neutral country into a "base of operations" because such supplies would assist a vessel to sail. Thus, if a French fleet watered or coaled at Heligoland the German Government would have claims against this Government to the extent of the damage resulting to the Germans. The law

applied not only to *Alabamas*, but to properly commissioned vessels.

In a letter to Harcourt Disraeli said :

> Edwards Hotel, *February* 9, 1873.—It appears to me that the best mode of meeting the case we were talking about would be for an independent member to give notice of an Address to the Crown, praying H.M. not to communicate, etc., the three rules to Foreign Powers without accompanying them with a note, expressing H.M.'s interpretation of them.
>
> This would bring the whole affair into discussion, and we might go to the bottom of it.
>
> Think of this ; the motion would require careful wording.

Harcourt in reply (February 10) sent the terms of an Address to Disraeli, but urged that it was not a case for a private member, but for persons of the highest responsibility in the House. He had no predilection for his own form of words, and asked Disraeli to ascertain the views of Lord Cairns on the matter, as he (Harcourt) had been in agreement with him on the Neutrality Commission. In the end the Address was placed in the hands of Gathorne H. Hardy, and a prolonged debate, in the course of which Harcourt spoke at great length, followed on March 21. The Government, however, were hostile, and the Address was rejected.

IV

At this time another issue of a domestic character engaged the attention of Harcourt. The hostility to the trade unions had not yet been overcome, and among the hostile element were many Liberals of the Manchester school. Harcourt was not one of them. He had no passion for the middle classes, but he had a genuine affection for the working classes. In his *Autobiographic Memories* Frederic Harrison says :

> I had a good deal of business with Harcourt when, with Forster and Hughes and Mundella, he took a leading part in the reform of the law of Trades Unions. In all these questions I always found him clear-headed, courageous, and trustworthy. Of course, he never ceased to be the genuine aristocrat at heart, both outwardly and

inwardly. I remember him as a friend of Maine and a promising barrister in the fifties, when he was at once elegant and magnificent. One night, as we walked home together from the Cosmopolitan, and I was full of the Disestablishment of the Church of England, he marched on, grandly shouldering his cane, crying out in the dead of the night in Oxford Street, " Then I and my people will go forth into the wilderness ! " He was always instinctively in the grand mood, which was in no way affected to impose on others, but was a native sense that he was both socially and intellectually of the order of magnates.

But, as a magnate, he had a real sense of the imperative duty of the governing class to do justice to the working classes, and he took up the cause of justice to the trade unionists with enthusiasm. He had endeavoured unavailingly to raise the question of the law affecting Labour in the House of Commons in 1872, and with Henry James had helped in drafting the demands of the Trades Union Congress. Later in the year the issue had assumed an urgent shape. There was a strike of gas-stokers employed by the London gas companies in November, and the Chartered Gas Company, when the strike was most serious, summarily and permanently dismissed 1,400 strikers, and five of the leaders were brought up on a charge of conspiracy at the Central Criminal Court before Mr. Justice Brett, and were sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. This proceeding created indignation, and led to an impressive demonstration in Hyde Park. Harcourt raised the question in Parliament. He denounced the attempt to subvert the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871, which recognized the legality of combination for trade purposes, by indictments "taken from the rusty armour of the common law," the law of conspiracy. Of all civil contracts, one contract alone was enforced by the cruel arm of the criminal law—the contract of master and servant. The same law was being applied to merchant shipping, and he understood that at Cardiff men had been committed to prison for breaking their contract because the ship in which they were to sail was unseaworthy. He recalled a saying of Wilkes's that the worst use to which you could put a man was to hang him. He thought that one of the worst uses to which you could

put a man was to put him in prison. He went on to point out that for other breaches of contract, financial and other, in which the happiness and the fortune of many people might be affected, the offence was not regarded as criminal unless fraud could be proved. Only in the case of master and servant was the criminal law called in. If that was not class legislation he did not know what was.

The Attorney-General (Coleridge) in his reply took his revenge on Harcourt for many old wounds:

> His honourable and learned friend (he said) hardly ever addressed the House without administering a lecture on our rashness and inconsideration, leaving it, of course, to be inferred that his own wisdom, his calm and temperate view of matters were above all suspicion and all praise, leaving them to imagine that he alone stood the one faithful soul true to his trust, who had warned, but like Cassandra in vain, the House of Commons not to proceed on a course of legislation which experience had shown them could lead only to contempt.

This rebuke was robbed of something of its reality by Coleridge's agreement that the law of conspiracy needed amendment and his suggestion that Harcourt, "whose accuracy, love of detail, and ability to devote time in a spirit of self-sacrifice to a difficult and intricate subject were recognized by all," should prepare a Bill.

A few days later Harcourt brought forward his Bill, which was backed by himself, Rathbone, Mundella, and Henry James. It dealt with the law of conspiracy as it affected trade combinations and the law of master and servant. It provided that no prosecution for conspiracy should be instituted unless the offence was indictable by statute or was punishable under some statute with reference to violent threats, intimidation, or molestation; that no prosecution should be instituted without the consent of one of the law officers of the Crown, and that persons convicted on such prosecution should not be liable to any greater punishment than that provided by law for such cases. He explained that the object of the Bill was simply to bring the law into harmony with the intention of the Criminal Law Amendment

Act of 1871. The Bill passed through the House of Commons, but was lost in the House of Lords. As for the five men sentenced by Mr. Justice Brett, the Home Secretary ordered their release after they had served four months of their sentence.

During the summer and early autumn numerous changes were made in the Ministry, which was now pretty visibly sinking. John Bright rejoined it, and Harcourt, writing to him, said :

Harcourt to Bright.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *August* 8.— . . . I hope you will bring much to the Government, your health which is the first thing and then your policy, and that we shall feel your hand in next year's Estimates and next year's Budget. A good rattling Budget such as Gladstone knows how to propound and a settlement of the 29th clause (which is the most rubbishy trifle that a great party ever squabbled over) may yet do something for us.

I confess I am not for "big programmes" and "loud cries"; they seem to me the resources of advertising tradesmen and bankrupt politicians. At present I am sure they would only revolt the country and make the business worse than ever.

I wish you could get the Government to address itself seriously to the grievances of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Master and Servants Acts, and Company Law.

These are the sorts of things the mass of the people do care about and which have been strangely neglected.

I could not refrain from telling you as one of the passengers in the water-logged and sinking ship with what pleasure I had learnt that an experienced old pilot, who has weathered many a storm, had gallantly come on board to lend a hand at the helm and the pumps.

If he was not a leading member of the Government by that time would he come down and pitch into them, wrote Chamberlain to Harcourt a little later (September 3) apropos of the annual meeting of the National Education League at Birmingham in October. Harcourt did not go, although he was not a leading member of the Government then.

He went to Scotland instead on a visit to the Duke of Sutherland at Dunrobin Castle. There is a record of that visit in some lines which Harcourt wrote at Dunrobin to another visitor there, "the daughter of two skies," Teresa Caracciolo, who in 1875 married Prince Colonna, and became

mother of Vittoria, the wife of Prince Teano. But while Harcourt was stalking the deer and penning pretty compliments to his fellow-guests, things were happening far away in London. A vacancy which he had long been expected to fill was created in the Solicitor-Generalship by the elevation of Coleridge, the Attorney-General, to the Bench. The position, however, was given to Henry James, who, in writing to Harcourt announcing the fact, said :

28, WILTON PLACE, *Thursday*.—I am sure I sincerely wish you had had this office instead of me. You had far higher political claims and would have made a far better Law Officer, but as it is I hope that your friendship will cause you to give me your good wishes.

If Harcourt was disappointed, his disappointment was short-lived. Sir George Jessel, the new Attorney-General, was raised to the bench, and James succeeded him. Gladstone offered the vacant Solicitor-Generalship to Harcourt, who wrote :

Harcourt to Gladstone.

TRINITY COLLEGE, *November* 13.—I gladly accept the offer which you have been so good as to make to me. Your letter only reached me here this morning, where I am engaged in delivering my annual course of lectures. This must be my apology for a delay in my answer, which I fear may be inconvenient. . . . I shall of course observe the absolute secrecy which you enjoin. But I shall be much obliged if you will allow your secretary to inform me at the earliest moment when I may communicate with my friends at Oxford—as constituencies though gracious are apt to be somewhat jealous sovereigns. . . .

The Press naturally showed much interest in the elevation of the famous guerrilla chief to the Ministry he had so often assailed. The *Spectator* spoke of him as a Liberal Disraeli, the *Saturday Review* observed that he was thoroughly sound on the subject of beer, and *The Times* delivered a homily on Harcourt's doctrine of Peace, Retrenchment and Reform, recalled the " Historicus " chapter in his past, and congratulated Gladstone on the magnanimity he had shown in preferring one who had so frequently led the opposition to his policy. Sir Henry Maine wrote :

Sir H. Maine to Harcourt.

27, Cornwall Gardens, *November* 17.—You have climbed as high as a lawyer can, without sacrificing your chance of more than the humble parliamentary position of most lawyers. I hope you will do something to restore the time when the Crown Officers were a real power in the House of Commons.

Times are changed since I taught you Greek. You will clearly have to make me something extremely swell some day, as a mark of my share in giving you a liberal education.

To Dilke, Harcourt wrote his private thoughts on what he had done:

Harcourt to Dilke.

Cambridge, *November* 21, 1873.—I don't know if I have done a very wise or a very foolish thing, probably the latter. But it is done, and my friends must help me to make the best of it. It was a great inducement to me the having H. James as a colleague. I could not have gone into it with the other chaps. . . .

I feel like an old bachelor going to leave his lodgings and to marry a woman he is not in love with, in grave doubts whether he or she will suit. However, fortunately *she* is going to die soon and we shall soon again be in opposition below the gangway and take the seats of T. Collins and J. Lowther with Hoare for our Elcho. The Duke of Argyll says "now I am in harness I must be driven in blinkers," but then Dukes are insolent by nature. Whatever comes I shall never leave the House of Commons. I don't see why I am not to be a politician because I am a Law Officer. Law Officers used to be politicians some years ago till the men of later days degraded the office.

Replying to a letter of congratulations from Lord E. Fitzmaurice, Harcourt wrote:

Harcourt to Lord E. Fitzmaurice.

Like you I had begun to find the responsibility of the gangway rather fatiguing, and I accepted as much out of moral laziness as anything else. We can always take refuge in a Gladstonian *non possumus*. One consolation is it will not last long.

I never felt more convinced that we like, I will not say the ship of fools, but at least the ship of Plimsoll, *Omnes ibimus ad diabolum et Dizzy non conquerabit.*

There was one cross to be borne. Writing to Mrs. Ponsonby, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Mrs. Ponsonby.

STRATFORD PLACE, *Wednesday*.—I am on Friday next at Windsor to undergo the last humiliation of being made a Knight!

I went down on my knees to Gladstone to let this cup pass from me, and asked him how he would like it himself, but he was inexorable. I think he had a malicious joy in thus punishing me for all my past sins. He is so like a woman. Never mind, I will be even with him yet and make him a Lord. It is horribly vulgar—almost as bad as being a Baronet—but it can't be helped. The only thing which would take the taste out of my mouth—I mean the *iron off my shoulders*—would be if you and your husband would give me luncheon in the Norman Tower, and show mercy to a degraded being.

Both he and James pleaded with Gladstone against the knighthood, but Gladstone insisted on the ground that it was necessary to attach knighthoods to certain distinguished offices in order to keep up the prestige of the Order. Harcourt replied: "I have a better plan than that to submit to you." "What is that?" "That you should take a knighthood yourself." [1]

On his appointment, Harcourt was returned unopposed for Oxford. He delivered one speech in which he dealt largely with domestic questions, education, trade unions, and so on, which brought him a cordial letter from Earl Russell and another also of peculiar interest from Disraeli (December 30):

Disraeli to Harcourt.

HUGHENDEN, *December* 30, 1873.—Returning from Trentham, I find on my table, with pleasure, a copy of your speech on your re-election, and from yourself. This gives me a natural, and unobtrusive, occasion to congratulate you on your late appointment to an eminent post, and which is only the first step in the course of high promotion, which you are destined to run.

[1] His son used to relate that after he had been knighted he received a bill of considerable fees from Garter King-at-Arms. These he refused to pay, but added that if Garter had attended the ceremony in his tabard and blown a fanfare on a trumpet, he (Harcourt) would have been inclined to give him largesse, but none of these things had happened, and he had received a secret and silent accolade. He told Garter King-at-Arms that if he liked to submit the charters upon which he founded his claim to fees, he, as Law Officer of the Crown, would advise him as to the legality of his claim. This Garter did not think it well to do, and ultimately a compromise was effected for a small sum.

At the beginning of the year, I assured our dear friend—and alas! my fair foe—Lady Waldegrave, who was always interested about your career, and sometimes anxious—that you would surely mount, and I was so confident on this head, that I mentioned to you, when we were alone in the summer, that, in my opinion, it would have been a great error, had you accepted office on the formation of the present Government. In that case, you could scarcely have founded the parliamentary reputation, which is the surest basis of power, and which has led to your present preferment.

I regret that it is not our fate *idem sentire de republica*, which is said to be the most powerful element of friendship, but personal sympathy and similar tastes are strong bonds, and I heartily hope that in our instance they will always preserve for me a friendship which I appreciate, and a friend whom I greatly regard.

There is a certain note of cordiality and intimacy in Harcourt's communications with Disraeli which contrast with the severely official correspondence at this time with Gladstone. It was not, as the *Spectator* suggested, that they were political birds of a feather, but that they shared each other's mundane interests and each enjoyed the other's wit. In the previous August, Harcourt, in sending a sketch of Pitt (still at Hughenden) to Disraeli, wrote:

London, *August* 16, 1873.—I despatched by train the sketch of Pitt, which I think is spirited and probably like. It has the consciousness of superiority about the look, and justifies the saying that *orbem naso suspendit.* I picked it up some years ago; it is one of a series of sketches done by Jackson for Lodge's portraits, and if it is thought worthy of a place in your gallery it will have reached its proper goal. Not that I can allow your claim to Pitt any more than Grenville as a purely Tory Minister. I think that like the child before Solomon's judgment seat he should be divided and that we are entitled to the first half of his public life. I shall not grudge you the second. . . .

Disraeli in sending his thanks referred to other additions to his gallery, and added:

Hughenden, *August* 17, 1873.—I do not at all agree with you in your estimate of Mr. Pitt's career. It is the first half of it which I select as his title-deed to be looked upon as a Tory minister: hostility to boroughmongering, economy, French alliance, and commercial treaties, borrowed from the admirable negotiations of Utrecht. The latter half is pure Whiggism: close parliaments, war with France, national debt, and commercial restrictions; all prompted and inspired by the arch-Whig trumpeter, Mr. Burke.

However, we won't quarrel about this, at least not now, but postpone it till our next ramble in Bradenham Chase.

I was much obliged to you for breaking my solitude. Your visit was too short, but very agreeable.

If it was assumed that office would quieten his activities the expectation was disappointed. He was no sooner in office than we find him writing to Bright urging him to press on Gladstone a policy of retrenchment, especially in regard to armaments:

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *December* 11, 1873.—I can't approach G. myself on the subject (1) because it would seem *egotistical*, (2) because it would appear *independent*. Two things most obnoxious to Governments. You I hope will not accuse me of the first and will forgive me the second.

If you have had time to look at my Oxford speech, which was only reported in *The Times* of Tuesday, I hope you will pardon my fidelity to the Church in consideration of my obstinate adherence to Peace and Economy. If the Estimates of 1874 are to be what they have been for the last three years I do not see how you and I can personally support them, when even *The Times* suggests their reduction. It is not only the harm they do in themselves but the example we set to the Tory Government which is so soon going to occupy our seats.

Lady Waldegrave evidently had reason to think that Harcourt meant to be troublesome, for writing to him from Strawberry Hill (December 11) she read him a very severe lesson:

Lady Waldegrave to Harcourt.

STRAWBERRY HILL, *December* 11.—What is the matter now? What has happened since you took office to make you say that if the Government does not go out soon you will? The only event I know of likely to make you discontented with your position is your own speech. To follow out your own simile of having married a woman you did not love—this speech is as inappropriate to your present position, as if the Duke of ——, in returning thanks at his wedding breakfast, had launched out into fresh praise of his late mistress, and then cried down his wife and her family. The speech itself is intensely clever and the language admirable, but the whole tone of it fully accounts for the silence of the *Telegraph*. No Government could be carried on if all its members were intent upon only playing their own game. No one is fit to govern who does not know how to serve. This is true even for the individual, who cannot serve himself, if he cannot govern himself. You have taken the shilling and must serve loyally, though you may hate and despise the commander-in-chief. . . .

CHAPTER XIII

DIFFERENCES WITH GLADSTONE

New Year's Speech at Oxford—Attack on Radical crotchet-mongers—Hoisting the Whig flag—Fall of the Gladstone Government—The Greenwich seat—Oxford election—Champions Hartington as Party leader—Differences with Gladstone on Public Worship Regulation Bill—The Admiralty Estimates—Gladstone's Six Resolutions—Controversy in *The Times*—Difference with Gladstone becomes more acute—Death of Lady Dilke—Gladstone's pamphlet on the Vatican Decrees—Harcourt on himself.

PERHAPS the homily addressed to him by Lady Waldegrave had its effect. In any case, Harcourt's customary speech at the Druids' dinner at Oxford on New Year's Day, 1874, contained plenty of "fun," but he was quite civil to the Government. He spoke of the immense surplus which the Budget would disclose, and described his leader as "the greatest Finance Minister whom this or any country has seen." He denounced the growth of local taxation and its causes in terms which must have made some of his Radical colleagues a little alarmed :

> The ratepayer is the helpless victim of the crotchet-mongers. Rate after rate is imposed in the vain attempt to fill the rapacious maw of centralized philanthropy and doctrinaire extravagance. The rate is nothing else than the quarterly bill sent in by a grandmotherly Government. The country is infested by a voracious caterpillar—I don't know what the entomologists call it—I would call it the *Inspector Vastator*. I think I once told you that the day might come when the number of the inspectors would exceed the number of the inspected ; it is fast approaching. Till you stay this plague of crotchets, till you have the courage and good sense to resist the importunate benevolence of these reckless spendthrifts, all your attempts to reform local taxation will be in vain.

But it was in regard to the land that he was most vigorous and most amusing. He dismissed the talk about the "unearned increment of land" as "an idea so illogical, so unreasonable, so perfectly unjust and so absolutely philosophical" that it did not deserve refutation; but he wanted the land to be freed from the paralysis of the law of entail. He drew a delightful picture of the English landowner, who was "not a sort of ogre in top-boots who roasts a peasant in the morning and stews a baby for supper." But he was afraid that they (the landowners) preferred foxes to Radicals and would rather preserve rabbits than Nonconformists. As to the idea that the law of entail was necessary to the preservation of old families, a subject in which, with his eye on Nuneham, he always revelled, he said:

I have myself no aversion to old families. If they are made of good stuff, like old wine they grow better by keeping. If they come of a bad vintage, the longer you bottle them the worse they grow. If a man is fit to support a great name, he will not want the law of entail to sustain him in the station to which he is born. If he is not fit the worst thing that can happen to him is that he should be bolstered up in a position that he discredits.

The speech was well received, and Harcourt, writing to Spencer Butler (January 5), said, "I am amused to see how, by dint of using the proper country gentleman slang in which I was brought up I have been able to propound this revolutionary scheme and yet be called a Tory for it." But there was one quarter in which he was in no danger of being called a Tory. It was no doubt with this offence in mind that his brother Edward wrote to him:

E. W. Harcourt to his Brother.

HASTINGS, *March* 18.—And now a word about our mutual relation. It has been a greater deprivation to me than I can say the not having you at Nuneham—nothing but an *ineradicable* dislike, on principle, to the opinions you represent at Oxford could have made me look with anything but the greatest pleasure upon having at Nuneham a brother who has always (excepting in one respect) shown me the most delicate affection.

I now tell you what I mean to propose to you. I ask for no answer and for no promise. I merely express a hope that you will be able to do as I so strongly wish.

One, that when at Nuneham you will take no political action in Oxfordshire.

Two, that you will abstain from education theories in Oxford.

Three, that as soon as you can see your way to do it you will cease to represent Oxford as a Radical.

These points I do not make into conditions, but only express an ardent hope that you will favour my prejudices (if you like to call them so) in respect to them.

Having said this much I have only to add that I hope you and Loulou will consider Nuneham your home.

Writing to Mrs. Tom Hughes, Harcourt announces that he has hoisted the Whig flag:

Harcourt to Mrs. Tom Hughes.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *January* 4, 1874.—We are very glad to hear of Plump's (T. Hughes's son) triumphs. Loulou has also his to record. He was the only boy in the school who came back with *two prizes*. And he had the most marks of twenty-five boys. Eastbourne has answered admirably for him both in mind and body. I never saw him so well. . . .

I hope you read my speech. I am delighted to see how it has riled the "enlightened" Party. I have hoisted the good old Whig flag, and shall stick to it. These *duffers* who have gone after strange women have made a nice mess of it.

I am so sorry to hear you have been so much amiss. I hope you will soon return to town.

I trust Tom ceases to be serious for an interval at Christmas. Tell him it is bad for the health to be always at it.

The hoisting of the Whig flag brought him an enthusiastic letter from H. Reeve of the *Edinburgh Review*, who said:

H. Reeve to Harcourt.

January 9, 1874.—Old John Russell wrote to me not long ago, "The Liberal Party, if it is to be a party again, must be the Whig Party." The Radicals may flounder and bluster as they please, but they will not get very far without us. You have very wisely and ably made a true Whig speech, and if you stick firmly to the old colours, I don't know any man who has a better claim than yourself to lead the Whig party, which upon the whole is the most glorious position in England.

Gladstone was a Tory, and is a Radical: but he never was a Whig at all.

Lord Stanhope is desirous of proposing you as a Member of "The Club." I cordially concur in this suggestion, and I hope it would be agreeable to you if you are elected.

In the meantime events were rapidly moving to a crisis. On January 23, Chichester-Fortescue (Lord Carlingford) wrote to Harcourt:

Chichester-Fortescue to Harcourt.

January 23, 1874.—I am just going back to Dudbrook after a highly interesting Cabinet, as you may conceive. We were all sworn to secrecy about the *coup d'état* this evening—otherwise I should like to have seen you. I hope you will approve. I think you will like the Gladstonian manifesto. At all events you like a row. The surprise is worthy of your own Dizzy. How he will denounce it!

With dissolution imminent Harcourt disburdened his mind in a letter to Lord E. Fitzmaurice:

Harcourt to Lord E. Fitzmaurice.

January, 1874.—I must utilize my official paper before next Tuesday.

I thought at first that the Government had better stay in to meet Parliament, but I don't think so now. I spoke the words of prophecy because I knew how deeply and universally the Government was execrated throughout the country. I have preached like Cassandra now for two years, and I told Bright on the celebrated Friday night when the resolution to dissolve was taken that it would be 1841 over again. This Government has fallen as all Governments will fall in England from sheer lack of common sense. The Treasury Bench seem to me very much in the position of the Imperialists after Sedan. In my judgment the rout has been richly deserved, and the Liberal Party will never recover till it is led by different men on different principles.

The sudden decision of the Cabinet to dissolve has been attributed to the rather trivial controversy that had taken place during the autumn in regard to the fact that Gladstone on taking over the Chancellorship of the Exchequer from Lowe had not submitted himself for re-election at Greenwich. Around this trumpery point a vast battle of words had raged. As a matter of fact, Gladstone had acted entirely on the advice of the law officers, Coleridge and Jessel, who had declared that having been re-elected on assuming the office of First Lord of the Treasury the Act of Queen Anne did not require further re-election. James and Harcourt on succeeding to the law offices expressed themselves inconclusively on the subject. Disraeli put the matter in

the forefront of his attack when the dissolution came, and it became necessary for the law officers to clear their Chief. James, writing to Harcourt from Taunton in the midst of the election, said :

I have had a letter from Godley, and I am to speak here to-night denying the statement in Dizzy's first paragraph about the Greenwich seat. The way I intend to put it is that Gladstone's law officers in August advised him that his seat was not vacant, and that you and I counselled him that he could not send in notice to the Speaker. I will take care not to state our opinion any stronger.

You must let me pledge your opinion to this extent. Telegraph to me to-morrow morning, but you really *must* not object. I will take every care not to express any opinion as to whether the seat was vacant or not.

No opposition here, but by jingo what a lot of seats we shall lose.

From this it is pretty evident that Harcourt, whose maiden speech in Parliament had been a defence of the Act of Queen Anne, had been disposed to think that Gladstone should have offered himself for re-election. His own reference to the subject in his election speech to his constituents at Oxford confirms this view. Replying to Disraeli's attack, he used this careful phraseology, which must be read in the light of James's letter :

I feel it my duty to tell you that Mr. Gladstone, in retaining his seat for the borough of Greenwich till the meeting of Parliament, was governed, as he was bound to be governed, by the opinion of the law officers of the Crown ; and, further, that if he had done otherwise he would, in my opinion, have done that which was unconstitutional.

But apart from this incident Gladstone had another reason for making the plunge then rather than at the end of another Session. His Government—in its achievements the most brilliant in our political history—had become waterlogged He had in prospect a magnificent surplus, and he aimed at the abolition of the income tax and the sugar duties. To achieve this he needed the economies which had been promised on naval and military expenditure, but Cardwell at the War Office was unable to meet his wishes, and, determined to carry his point and conscious of the disintegration of the Ministry, Gladstone decided on the bold course of an appeal to the country. The dissolution took place on

January 26, and Gladstone in his manifesto to the Greenwich electors promised the abolition of the income tax, relief to local taxation and a further step in the reduction of duties on articles of general consumption. The vigour of the appeal alarmed Disraeli, who thought it would carry the country. He retorted on what he called his rival's " prolix narrative " with light sarcasms about the Straits of Malacca, and with vague hints that the national institutions and the integrity of the empire were in danger ; but to the proposals for the remission of taxation which were the core of Gladstone's manifesto he offered neither criticism nor objection.

Harcourt went down to Oxford, from whence he wrote to Dilke :

> Oxford, 1874.—*Rari nantes in gurgite vasto.* " Here we are again." As Dizzy said the night of the division on the University Bill, " It is very amusing." To tell you the truth I am not sorry. It had to come and it is as well over. We shall get quit of the County duffers of the party and begin afresh. I return to town to-morrow. We must all meet again *below* the gangway. We shall still have a nice little party though diminished. I am very sorry about Fawcett, but we shall soon get him back again.

If in his private letters Harcourt was critical of the Government, he balanced matters by the fervour of his advocacy to his constituents. He made a detailed defence of the policy pursued by Peel and continued by Gladstone, dwelt on the triumphs of Gladstonian finance, drew a fundamental distinction between Liberal and Conservative foreign policy, contrasting Gladstone's protest against the cruelties of King Bomba with the Conservative support of Austria and sympathy with the South in the Civil War. In home policy he touched on incidents like the gas-stokers' strike, the Chipping Norton case, the Burials Act, and the perpetual hostility of the House of Lords to all the alleviations of popular discontent. The result of the poll was :

Harcourt	2,332
Cardwell	2,281
Hall (C.)	2,198

The figures showed how the popular tide had left the Government in the country generally. The reaction was

general, and the Tory majority of forty-eight did not represent the real dimensions of the blow, for the Irish Liberals had broken away from the British political system, and established the Nationalist party with the name of Home Rulers and a separate organization.

Writing to Mrs. Ponsonby immediately after the election, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Mrs. Ponsonby.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *Wednesday*.—England has pronounced a great and overwhelming verdict in favour of *Philistinism*—which is a vituperative epithet intended to discredit common sense. To poor Philistines like myself this is not unsatisfactory. . . .

The philosophers and the philanthropists are "gone to pot." The "world betterers" are nowhere.

The profession of a political prophet is a poor one, but I have pursued it with some success for the last two years. I was amused to find your friend the "intransigeant" F. Harrison, rejoicing over the fall of the crotchet-mongers. I am glad my dear Dizzy is to go to his grave in a blaze of glory. It is dreadfully immoral but very amusing. And in this dull world that is always something.

For my part I go into Opposition with much better heart than I entered Government. Adversity suits my temperament and puts me in good humour and good spirits. If I must be a knight (and that is the only thing which is indelible), I prefer to be a knight errant.

Remember me to your husband; he is like the physician who attends the death-bed of innumerable administrations.

There is a pleasant appendix to the Oxford contest in the shape of a letter to Harcourt from his defeated opponent, A. W. Hall, who says:

A. W. Hall to Harcourt.

BARTON ABBEY, *February* 6.—Surely no man ever had such generous opponents! Thank you very much indeed for your letter; amidst all your work to have taken the trouble to write to me is an act of kindness I shall not forget. I enjoyed the fight uncommonly, though it was hard work for a novice. It's not unlike the excitement of a good run, and though I lost my fox, I have the satisfaction of feeling that I rode straight and did my best.

Cardwell, on the defeat of the Government, accepted a peerage, and Harcourt seems to have suggested to Chichester-Fortescue, who had been beaten at Louth, that he should

contest the vacant seat. Fortescue, however, wrote (February 17):

I did not get away from Gladstone's until very late last night. We are out at once, though there may possibly be another Cabinet first. Mr. G. will not act as leader of Opposition and will make that clear. There will be no leader so far as I can see.

I have decided to go to the other place—with great difficulty and many throes, aided by the doctor, who was very urgent on the ground of health. Oxford would have been a temptation which I don't think I could have resisted, had it been safe, but it was evidently doubtful, even with all your powerful and friendly help so heartily promised.

Lord E. Fitzmaurice wrote, February 18, 1874, to Harcourt suggesting that Fawcett should contest the Oxford seat, and adding:

Home Department.— . . . Gladstone is not going to act as the regular leader of the party, but will only attend the House occasionally. This seems to me about the worst arrangement possible. Hartington is, I believe, to play Addington to Gladstone's Pitt. The one arrangement will last about as long as the other did.

In his reply Harcourt disclosed the attitude in regard to the leadership of the Liberal party which governed his actions for the next half-dozen years:

Harcourt to Lord E. Fitzmaurice.

14, Stratford Place.—You may be sure that Fawcett has been present to my mind, but I fear he is too strong meat for the babes of Oxford who have been fed on the mild pap of Cardwell and Harcourt. The brewer would beat him into fits, and a personal canvass is absolutely necessary. I should not like to expose him to a contest which I know would be hopeless, especially in a place where the *res angusta domi* is not appreciated. You don't think as highly of Hartington as I do. He has very good judgment, great honesty and good pluck, all great political qualities, and how refreshing a little silence and indifferent speaking will be. The change in itself would be delightful. I think him far the best constitutional Sovereign in the party after the fall of the despotism. Some good stout northern Borough is the place for Fawcett.

Harcourt had discussed the question of leadership with Hartington, who wrote to him:

Hartington to Harcourt.

IRISH OFFICE, *February* 20.—Brand (the Speaker) was out of town yesterday, and I saw no one of much importance. I have, however, thought a good deal of our conversation. I am inclined to think that so long as Mr. Gladstone continues to take any part in the House of Commons, no other leader of the party is possible; and if he should make up his mind to retire altogether, the members of the late Government and other heads of the party must consider what is to be done. I do not think, therefore, that any independent expression of opinion on my part is now called for, or would in loyalty to Mr. Gladstone and my late colleagues be justified.

But Harcourt was determined that the leadership should not be left in commission. Writing to Frank Hill, the editor of the *Daily News*, he said:

Harcourt to Frank Hill.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *March* 3.—I need not say I certainly concur in the sentiments of the "Liberal M.P." The notion of letting the Liberal Party drift with the tide like an old collier without a rudder seems to me detestable. It is all due to the selfish egotism of the *two G's* (Gladstone and Granville) as they are called, who know they cannot carry on themselves and want to prevent anyone else doing so. I am more and more convinced that Hartington is the only possible figurehead for the ship. I wish you would write an article strongly insisting on the necessity of organization and a leader, and indicate the leader or not as you think best.

The issue of the Liberal leadership rapidly developed as the Session advanced. The new Government had foreshadowed in the Queen's Speech an unexciting programme of legislation, and the chief interest of the Session centred, not in a Government measure, but in the Public Worship Regulation Bill, which was introduced ostensibly as a non-party measure on which members might vote without involving the Government. As this Bill proposed, in the blunt phrase coined by Disraeli, "to put down Ritualism," it excited enormous popular interest. It summoned Gladstone from his very brief retirement at Hawarden, full of zeal for the liberties of the Church. The discussions on this Bill were important in Harcourt's career, because they brought him into frank conflict with Gladstone, and threatened at one time to cause a fatal breach between the two men.

But before this there had been a curious little aside between Gladstone, Goschen and Harcourt which had shown the cross-currents within the party. It arose in connection with the Navy Estimates. In introducing them Ward Hunt, the First Lord in the new Government, pointed out that they were the estimates of the late Government. Gladstone thereupon wrote to Harcourt pointing out that they were not the estimates of the late Government. They were the estimates of the Department, and had not been endorsed by the Cabinet. Harcourt sent the letter to Goschen, who had been First Lord of the Admiralty and who in the course of his reply said :

Goschen to Harcourt.

SEACOX HEATH, *April* 7.—It is no use beating about the bush, and I should like to write to Gladstone direct, as I should be entitled to write if I had seen the letter.

One thing I can tell you. The estimates were not sanctioned by the Cabinet nor by Gladstone before we went out. He has been very particular about this, and both Cardwell and I left memoranda behind us stating that our Estimates were departmental only, that they contained what we should probably have submitted to the Cabinet, but that they had not been passed. (I am writing of course from memory.) . . . My theory is that Gladstone is vexed at the Press treating the Estimates passed on to our successors as *our Estimates*, after the trouble he had taken to draw the distinction. It is certain that he is not pledged to them. . . .

In his reply to Gladstone, Harcourt said :

Harcourt to Gladstone.

TORQUAY, *April* 9.— . . . I am very glad to think that the Liberal Party is not committed to high estimates, for I have never shared the opinion that growing wealth is a justification for increased extravagance. I do not know if you are aware that I voted last week (the only vote I have given in this Parliament) with Lawson for a reduction of the *Army* Estimates. I could not do otherwise, having regard to my former declarations and conduct. But I was sorry that A. Peel appeared to regard it as a vote against my late colleagues—a view of the matter which I am happy to think your letter altogether refutes.

I suppose the intentions of the Government on the Budget are a complete mystery, but I shall be most happy to do what little I can to sustain the cause of economy to which in these adverse times I am more than ever faithful.

If the Government once repudiate the principle of remitting taxes, there will be no end to extravagance, for so long as the residue is only to go to liquidation of debt no one will care how small is the margin.

It seems to me that each tax taken off is a fresh recognizance binding on the Government not to waste.

II

With the introduction of the Public Worship Bill there arose an open conflict between Harcourt and his Chief. Apart from the temperamental and other causes of friction between these two somewhat august spirits, a plain ecclesiastical issue was certain to bring them into collision. They were the poles apart in religious feeling and church polity. Gladstone was saturated with the spirit of the High Anglican movement. To him the Church was a divine institution that owed no homage to the secular will of the State. Harcourt, on the other hand, was both by origin, taste and training, the most unmystical of Erastians. He was a sound Church and State man, who stood upon the rock of the blessed Revolution, spoke of the Prayer Book as the schedule to an Act of Parliament, and regarded the Church as an institution by law established, over which Parliament presided as a court armed with pains and penalties. Between these two hostile views there could be no reconciliation and the attack on Ritualism brought them into sharp collision.

The Bill was introduced on April 20 by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Tait). Its intention was to give the bishops and the archbishops more power to check practices which were not in harmony with the character of the Established Church. In directing the forms of public worship the Bishop was to be assisted by a Board of Assessors, on which laymen and clergy would sit. Any one parishioner, or the rural dean, or the archdeacon would have the right to complain to the Bishop of any practice by an incumbent which he thought was not in accordance with the rules of the Church. If the Bishop thought that the matter ought to be inquired into, the Board of Assessors would be summoned, and the Bishop would be guided by their advice. The incumbent,

if the judgment went against him, was to have a right of appeal to the Archbishop, also sitting with a Board of Assessors.

The proposal reawakened all the issues of the "No Popery" cry of the fifties. It cut right across the party lines, and in the House of Lords the Secretary for India, Lord Salisbury, as pronounced a High Anglican as Gladstone himself, together with Lord Selborne, a Low Churchman, violently opposed the Bill, while in the House of Commons, Salisbury's leader, Disraeli, referring to his opposition, described him as "a master of gibes, and flouts and jeers." The measure was substantially modified before it reached the House of Commons, notably by a decision that an ecclesiastical judge should preside in the Courts of Canterbury and York. Its arrival brought Gladstone back to the House of Commons to declare war on what he regarded as profanation. In a speech on the second reading, which greatly moved the House, he gave notice of six Resolutions which he proposed to move on the principles which he thought ought to direct any legislation on this subject. Needless to say, these Resolutions were diametrically opposed to the spirit of the Bill. They laid stress on the diversity of usage which had grown up in the Church since the Reformation, and the unreasonableness of proscribing all varieties of opinion, on the danger of giving too much power to individuals, and the undesirability of substituting uniformity for the existing variety of ritual.

Emphasizing the fact that this was not a Government Bill and that everybody was free to express his individual opinion, Harcourt followed with a broadside on his leader—"the great enchanter," to whom they had "listened with rapt attention as he poured forth the wealth of his incomparable eloquence." His argument was that the law of a Church established by the law must be declared by a secular tribunal. In a free Church the congregation had a summary remedy against a minister who defied its creed or custom, but in a national Church the incumbent was in possession of a freehold and could defy the congregation. But he held

under a legal tenure which defined at once his power and his duties. The law was supreme, and it was that supremacy which was the only guarantee of the liberty of the clergy and of the rights of the people. The attack was inevitably much discussed. The *Annual Register* says that "people said it was evident, from the defiant attitude assumed by Sir William Harcourt to his former Chief, that he was making a bid for the leadership of the Liberal Party, whose allegiance Mr. Gladstone might have done not a little to forfeit by his present action." There is no reason to look further than the acute difference in the outlook of the two men in religious matters. Harcourt's Erastian principles were so marked as to wear to present-day readers an eighteenth-century aspect. The Church of England was to him "the parliamentary state Church"; to Gladstone it was the mystical body of Christ.

Writing to *The Times* the next day to explain and expand his meaning, as his habit was, Harcourt said:

> The gist of my argument was to show that the Reformation of religion was not effected by or with the aid of Convocation; that all that was really effectual in that great transaction was accomplished by Royal Commissions of selected divines, whose work was imposed perforce on the clergy by Act of Parliament. . . .
>
> I know that it will be said that these are Erastian opinions. . . . But they are the doctrines on which the Parliamentary State Church of England was founded, and on which alone she stands. She has never rested on some Concordat negotiated between co-ordinate and co-equal powers. She is a national Church only because she is the work of the nation, acting through the only legitimate exponents of the national will—I mean the Crown and Parliament. I know there is another theory which is the opposite of Erastianism, and its name is Ultramontanism. . . .
>
> I know that there are those to whom these doctrines are odious, but they are those to whom the history of the Reformation and the distinctive name of Protestant are detestable.

The controversy roused Harcourt to study ecclesiastical authorities, and he poured out his learning in his letters to *The Times* with very much the same zest as he had shown in the "Historicus" controversy. Meanwhile the battle at Westminster, which had become largely a duel between Gladstone and Harcourt, waxed more fierce.

Disraeli had now practically made the passage of the Bill a matter of confidence. Gladstone had withdrawn his Resolutions, but continued the fight almost single-handed. He introduced common law into the discussion to the horror of Harcourt, who said that the common law of Christendom was fulminated by the Vatican and since 1533 had been repudiated as controlling the authority of Parliament. Temper was rising with the heat of the August days, and the debate on an Amendment giving the complainant power to carry the case against an incumbent straight to the Archbishop if the Bishop declined to take proceedings led to a somewhat bitter exchange of letters between Gladstone and Harcourt. In the third of these missives, all written on the same day, Gladstone wrote:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

21, CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE, *August* 3.—What you effectually *conveyed* to the House was that a minority of bishops appointed during the last five years would not put the law in force, and in support of this statement you cited publicly the act of a particular Bishop, without informing the House that he was not one appointed within the last five years and privately the names of two who were. I think I was entitled to ask you for the foundation of the heavy charge you had in court language made against me, but I so far agree with you about a conversation which was *de facto* private that I shall leave the matter where it is and rest under the injustice.

After this cut and thrust in private the disputants promptly retorted on each other in public. On August 5, Harcourt made a long and elaborate speech against Gladstone's position. If, as Mr. Gladstone asserted, the Church knew nothing of courts appointed by Parliament with the assent of the Crown, then, he said, it was perfectly idle for Parliament to occupy itself with the discipline of the Church. The doctrine of Gladstone might be the true doctrine, he declared, but it was not to be found in the Constitution of England or in the Church of England. He praised Disraeli, "because he has long had the sagacity to divine the sentiments and to execute the will of the English people. . . . He has seen that not England alone, but all Europe is divided into two camps, and that the camp on the

one side is that of Ultramontanism and on the other that of Sacerdotalism." He urged him not to draw back from the struggle. Cobden had described Free Trade as a question which would dislocate many parties and destroy many governments. And this was a more important question than Free Trade. He was firmly convinced that the Church of England could only be saved by Protestantizing that Church, and that could only be done by the power that originally made it Protestant, the State.

Disraeli followed with a speech that attacked impartially Gladstone and his own Secretary for India, Lord Salisbury But it was Gladstone's retort on his late Solicitor-General which made the debate memorable.

> I confess fairly (he said) I greatly admire the manner in which he has used his time since Friday night. On Friday night, he says, he was taken by surprise: the lawyer was taken by surprise, and so was the Professor of Law in the University of Cambridge: the lawyer was taken by surprise, and in consequence he had nothing to deliver to the House but a series of propositions on which I will not comment.
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> . . . My hon. and learned friend has had the opportunity of spending four or five days in better informing himself on the subject, and he is in a position to come down to this House and for an hour and a half to display and develop the erudition he has thus rapidly and cleverly acquired. . . . The fact is my hon. and learned friend, who has spoken of the youth of the Bishops, though most of them exhibit grey hairs, is still in his parliamentary youth; he has not yet sown his parliamentary wild oats. When he has I have not the smallest doubt he will combine with his ability—which no one sees with greater satisfaction than I do—temper and wisdom, a due consideration for the feelings of others, strictness in restating the arguments of opponents—in fact every political virtue that can distinguish a notability of Parliament, and, if he persists in the course of study he has begun, a complete knowledge of ecclesiastical law.

In the end the Commons did not insist on carrying their amendment in the face of the opposition of the House of Lords. Harcourt [1] had been in communication with Arch-

[1] During the progress of the Public Worship Regulation Act, Harcourt took out of his son's collection of coins a silver ten-shilling piece of Charles I, struck during the siege of Oxford, with a portrait

bishop Tait throughout the controversy, and a passage from the Archbishop's diary (August 9) shows how anxious the position was:

. . . On Monday night, as I was returning from town, I was pursued by a messenger from Disraeli to say that unless we could carry the Commons' amendment the Bill was lost. . . . On Tuesday the Bishops met by appointment in the House of Lords. They were bent on resistance to the clause, and carried the day. All voted against it except Carlisle, who did not vote, the Chancellor's attempt at a compromise having broken down. All seemed very black, and I went home to bed convinced that we had lost our six months' labour, and must prepare for a frightful year of agitation. It was not until I had read *The Times* article next morning that I had any hope, and immediately after I had read it, came a second note from Disraeli to say that in his judgment all was lost. (The note is as follows, "I am employed in trying to rally the ship. I conclude the Bill is lost. This is a heavy blow, I would almost say a fatal one. D.") I had my carriage at the door, and having a note from the Duke of Richmond saying that almost everything depended on the line taken by Sir William Harcourt (who was supposed to be the leader of the irreconcileables), I started in pursuit of him to his house: found him gone: tracked him to his club: got him into my carriage and urged wiser counsels. . . . I used my best influence too with Holt and others. . . . By two o'clock the Bill was safe, and I wrote in the House of Lords to the Queen—"Thank God, the Bill has passed."

Among the many letters which Harcourt received in regard to the fight over the Public Worship Act was one from a relative of Gladstone, the Rev. J. Carr Glyn, who thanked him for "so ably and manfully coming forward in the House and in your letters to *The Times* on the cause of Protestantism." Replying to a letter from Baron Bramwell, Harcourt wrote:

Harcourt to Lord Bramwell.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *August* 12.—I was very much obliged to you for your kind letter and to know that there are some *good judges* who approve what I have tried to do.

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of the King riding above the buildings of the City, which bore on its reverse the following legend:

Relig. Prot.
Leg. Ang.
Liber. Par.

and gave it to Disraeli.

I am and always have been and always shall be a *Whig* which I take to be the faith of all sensible Englishmen. The great vice of Gladstone is that he has never understood Whig principles and never will. If the Liberal Party is ever to be reconstructed it must be on that platform. If we can do nothing else we can at least prevent G. coming back with a motley crew of Home Rulers and Republicans, and I for one am much more content to bear the ills we have than fly to others which we know too well.

III

Although, apart from the battle royal over ritualism, there was little of interest in the work of the Session, Harcourt was active in many directions. He took a strong line on the Endowed Schools Amendment Bill which he regarded as a part of "a crescendo of denominationalism." "In 1869," he said, "we passed a Bill respecting the will of the founder; in 1873 we extended that principle; and now, in 1874, it is proposed to extend it still further. In 1869 the pious founder; in 1873 the more pious founder; in 1874 the most pious founder." What the Government meant by the pious founder was "something that mirrored their own prejudices; something which enabled them to treat the endowed schools as fortresses and strong positions against the Nonconformists: something which gave effect to their own sectarian passions."

He spoke on the Land Titles and Transfer Bill, insisting that registration should be accompanied by a simplification of title and tenure; pressed for reform of naval administration, showing the repeated changes of plan at the Admiralty, and interested himself in the crusade for saving Epping Forest to the people, presiding at a great meeting at Shoreditch Town Hall on the subject.

In the midst of the Public Worship controversy, Baron Bramwell wrote asking Harcourt to protest "against the Chancellor's proposal to make a Court of Error out of the Chief." Harcourt replied:

Harcourt to Lord Bramwell.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *Saturday*.—I have no special reverence for "Chiefs" of any description whether in the Law or in politics.

But it is difficult (however true it may be and no doubt is) to say in public that the Chief Justices knew less of law than other people. All barristers are supposed to be and are called "learned," Judges "more learned" and Chief Justices "most learned"—such are the odious degrees of comparison, as with "Very Reverend," "Right Reverend" and "Most Reverend" Archdeacons, Bishops and Archbishops when none of them are Reverend at all. It does not do to let the public into these secrets too much. They might think that none of the august were learned at all. However, I will see what can be done, though I have got a tough job in hand just now in trying to convince the H. of C. that Gladstone knows nothing of the English Constitution in Church and in State—which, however, is the fact.

In the autumn Harcourt lost one of the circle of his closest friends by the death of Lady Dilke. Writing to him from Paris, after his bereavement, Dilke said:

Dilke to Harcourt.

PARIS, *Wednesday*.—I have been wandering in the South of France ever since—and my letters were all kept from me till Monday night. Yours was one of the first I read, and I addressed an envelope to you intending to answer it, but I couldn't, and I don't know whether I shall be able to finish this now. You see, I can write to the people she didn't know, and to those she didn't love, but it is hard to write to those she loved. To think of your visit and of my letter to you. It is awful, and she loved Loulou too—but above all she loved you for the tenderness of your heart which we know and which so few can guess the extent of—as we could. I am afraid I can't go on, do write to me. I don't know what I shall do.

Harcourt replied:

Harcourt to Dilke.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *November* 1.—I received your heartbroken and heartbreaking note last night on my return from Eastbourne, where I have been to settle my dear little boy at school for the winter.

What shall I—what can I say to you? I know how idle are all commonplace words of consolation to you. Still you have something to look to in the affection of your many devoted friends—and hers—and in the love of your child, who will I trust live to be to you what mine has been to me. Make an effort to transfer to it the wealth of your loving heart which has been so terribly lacerated. I too loved my wife as you did yours, and it is to me still after twelve years a daily joy to think over the *happy* days we spent together and to remember how no cloud ever arose between us and that we both made each others' lives delightful. I have never seen two human

beings more happy in each others' love than you and she. I know how fearful must be the return to the scene of so much joy. But it must be done.

Pray don't give up public life. It must be your sheet anchor; and your child will make for you a home. I should come at once to see you and to try to be of use to you, but I go to-day to Cambridge for my lectures, which will keep me all November. But in December and January I shall be free, and if the society of one of your most devoted friends who loves you for her sake and your own can be of any comfort to you my time shall be at your disposal.

You and your sorrows are never out of my thoughts. Write to me when you feel disposed, but not otherwise as I shall quite understand it. I will write to you frequently and try to make you think of those things which in happier days she and you and I enjoyed so much together.

Your affectionate friend,
W. V. Harcourt.

Loulou has talked so much to me of you, and was only waiting to know when he could write to you.

Three days later he wrote again:

14, Stratford Place, *November* 4.—I fully meant to have written to you before, and was most glad to receive your note which tells me that you have been able to see your friends again. I have just done with Cambridge where all who knew you are full of interest and sympathy for you. I had a good class and saw much of Fawcett. He is become such an out and out Gladstonian that I call him *Georgius Glynnus Secundus*.[1]

I fear the great Dizzy is very shaky and that his illness has been very serious. I doubt if we shall see or hear much more of him.

In spite of all the invitations which Liberal orators think it right to address to Gladstone the best opinion seems to be that he means to return less than ever to the House of Commons. . . .

The feud between Gladstone and Harcourt smouldered on after the passing of the Act. Gladstone published his pamphlet on the "Vatican Decrees," and, speaking at Oxford, Harcourt referred to the troubles of the Liberal party, and remarked that they would not restore the healthy tone of an over-excited system by blazing rhetoric and sensational pamphleteering. Returning to the subject later in his speech, after a general repudiation of extremists and a profession of his faith in Whig principles, he said they could not expect him to join in an onslaught on his Catholic fellow-

[1] G. Glyn, Liberal Whip, afterwards Lord Wolverton.

subjects, and that, as a politician it was no part of his business to undertake the office of a controversial theologian. He fought over again the battle of the Public Worship Bill and defended the Establishment, remarking that it had been the good fortune of their race that they had nourished "a traditional distrust of priests and an instinctive aversion to philosophers." *The Times*, in commenting on this speech, said that "the crotchets of humanitarians and the dogmas of advanced thinkers will not receive any encouragement from the Liberal Party, so far as Sir William Harcourt can exercise any influence over it." With regard to his reference to Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet, it remarked that the passages "derive their chief interest from the indications they give of Sir William Harcourt's probable relations with Mr. Gladstone during the coming session."

The question of the leadership was still the subject of domestic concern in the Liberal party, and writing to Frank Hill, Harcourt said:

Oxford & Cambridge Club, *Sunday evening*.—The four-and-twenty tailors went to kill a snail, but when they saw his horns they were so frightened that they returned to their bench where they are still sitting cross legged. The truth is none of them dare go near G., and nothing has been done. They hope in a few days, perhaps weeks, more probably months, to dare to do something. In the meantime G. still sulks, and says he will not lead. They go on begging him, but they have been so long like babies in leading strings that they can't walk alone. In the meanwhile the disorganization is complete. There is no whip, no office, *no nothing*. The thing is ridiculous and disgraceful. You will be safe in saying there is nothing decided, nothing arranged, nothing prepared. The fate of the Liberal Party depends on whether G. chooses to get out of the sulks.

The hoisting of the Whig flag had given satisfaction in one quarter. In a Christmas letter to his brother, Edward Harcourt said:

Hastings, *December* 24.—In writing you a line to send you the best wishes of the season, I must express to you my satisfaction at the tone of your last speech at Oxford. I do not despair of seeing you a sound Conservative some day, at any rate I am very glad to see you disclaim the Radical affinities of the Liberal connection.

The story of this year may be fittingly rounded off with one of those pieces of self-portraiture which Harcourt had for years occasionally indulged in in writing to Mrs. Ponsonby. In the course of a letter to her (December 23) he says:

Harcourt to Mrs. Ponsonby.

It is true that in my opinions and my life I am what I have always been a good deal *self-contained* (what perhaps others would call *self-centred*). But that I suppose belongs to those who have strong wills and great ambitions.

As to the future, I assure you that my objects are not so definite as you suppose. I have a passionate love and admiration for the character of the English people. Those who think it is assumed are mistaken. If I can reflect their best thoughts and operate in any way on their judgment I am satisfied, though I have no doubt I share their weaknesses and have some tendency to glorify their prejudices. One does this incurably towards the woman or the people one loves.

Whatever other people may think, you know mine is a really passionate nature. The events of my life have tended to chasten and sadden it, but its natural buoyancy and courage is not destroyed. I don't say I have no wish to leave an English name—for I have. But as to official pre-eminence I am careless of it. The objects of personal ambition in that sense are more or less dead to me. . . .

However, I stick by the old Whig motto *Che sara sara*. I try to understand the English people; perhaps one day they will understand me. If they don't it will only be what has happened to my betters before. . . .

CHAPTER XIV

HARCOURT BACKS HARTINGTON

The Question of the Leadership—Antagonism to Gladstone—Forster or Hartington—Hartington Leader of the Party—The Burials Bill—A Visit to Hughenden—The Suez Canal Shares—Oxford speeches—The Slave Circular—The Exclusiveness of the "Late Cabinet"—Naval controversy in *The Times*—Canada and Merchant Shipping Acts—The Disraeli peerage—A Swiss Holiday—Second marriage.

FOR the first time since he had become a member for Oxford, Harcourt did not attend the Annual Druids' Dinner on the New Year's Day of 1875. His absence was attributed to health reasons, but the fact was that the situation was not one which could tempt a Liberal statesman to any public declaration. The Party was in dissolution. After his irruption on the Public Worship Bill, Gladstone had subsided into silence. In spite of the urgent appeals from his immediate circle his mind steadily moved in the direction of final retirement from the leadership of the Party. Granville, Hartington and Goschen on the one side, and Bright and Chamberlain on the other were anxious that he should continue to lead, but he was satisfied that neither the Party generally nor the country desired another period of active reforms. Even if they did he was doubtful about his own fitness to conduct them and shrank from a rupture in the Party which would leave him leading one section against another. In the discussion which was going on behind the scenes Harcourt was taking an active part. His antagonism to Gladstone had become temporarily the governing motive of his political activities, and he was determined that there

should be "no return from Elba." In the first days of the New Year he was engaged in a feverish correspondence with his late colleagues on the subject. From the extracts which follow it will be seen that he was not getting much encouragement in the course he was pursuing, though in the end the object he sought to attain, a Hartington leadership, was accomplished. It was accomplished, however, by Gladstone's own final resolve to retire, conveyed in the letter of January 13 to Granville, rather than by the wish of his colleague that he should retire.

Harcourt to Goschen.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *January* 4.—. . . Gladstone having dismissed seventy Catholic votes I suppose will return as the leader of about eighty Radical Disestablishmentarians. I wish him joy of them. It is exactly the position I wish to see him occupy. And I rather hope that the approaching meeting at Birmingham will make that clear.

There will remain about 120 moderate Liberals who will take precious good care he shall not be in the position to do any serious mischief. For my part I see nothing better at present than to keep the present men in under *surveillance*. As long as Dizzy lives it will not be difficult. If he goes it will be a serious matter, as they will probably make themselves impossible by their follies. But in my opinion anything almost would be more endurable than a restoration of the late *régime*.

Harcourt to Lord E. Fitzmaurice.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *January* 6.— . . . Everything is possible and nothing particularly probable. Gladstone's Will-o'-the-Wisp genius has been fatal to a party to which he has never really belonged and whose principles he does not now understand.

I assure you honestly nothing is further from my desire than to lead anybody. I find it difficult enough to lead myself. . . .

Whether he (Gladstone) means to come back to the opposition Bench as leader, I don't know, and I doubt if he does himself. It will be determined, as anything he does is, by temper and passion, and I don't see any use or possibility of electing a *remplaçant*. There is not agreement enough on the subject, and for obvious reasons it is not a matter in which I feel disposed to stir. Things must slide for the present.

I think it very likely that Chamberlain & Co. will make the Birmingham meeting at the end of the month an occasion for a pronunciamento in his favour. But this will do him more harm

than good. I have never counted on James to oppose Gladstone. He does not love G., but he fears him, which I don't. . . .

I hear to-day from the Chancellor that Dizzy is really all right again. I am very glad of it, for if he were to go there would be chaos. It seems to me there is nothing to do for the present but to keep these men in, and without D. it would be probably impossible. I am going to meet the old lot at Strawberry Hill on Saturday. If I hear any news worth writing I will send it to you.

Harcourt to Goschen.

14, Stratford Place, *January* 7.— . . . If Gladstone returns as leader my course will depend on the policy which he pursues. I am a little sick of what G. Glyn called "loyalty," which, as far as I understand, was a servile abandonment of all principles to the whim of one individual. That sort of *loyalty* I hope I shall never practice. My loyalty is due to the *principles* of the Party to which I belong. And I can neither see them dragged through the dirt not suffer myself to be so. If it be true, as is confidently stated, that Gladstone is to return in order to make a declaration against the Church, and you and your late colleagues think that even if you disapprove such a course you have not the right to say so: I can only protest that I do not so regard my political obligations, nor should I do so if the leader was a far wiser man than Gladstone is. I shall take on that subject the same course as I did on his Resolutions. It seems to me impossible for any man who respects himself to hold his political opinions as a sort of tenant at will ready to be ejected at an instant's notice. It was in my opinion this singular doctrine of "loyalty" (which I should call by another name) which deprived the late Cabinet of that independence of judgment and freedom of consultation which is essential to the dignity and vitality of a government.

A party or a cabinet or a government which only meets to register submissively the varying fancies of an individual, without daring even to remonstrate or to discuss, is sure to perish as the empire of Louis Napoleon did and as the Government of Gladstone has done.

I know something of the way in which the Cabinet of Lord Palmerston was conducted when Sir C. Lewis was a member of it. In those days Cabinet Ministers dared to have an opinion of their own, and frequently made them prevail. But then Lord Palmerston was not a theologian. I claim the right to act just as independently as Gladstone himself did towards the Government of Lord Palmerston from 1854 to 1859 after he had been his colleague and indeed had accepted office under him. If Gladstone will stick to the principles of the Liberal Party I am very ready to act with him or under him. But I will not undertake to support any wild proposals which his flighty nature may at any moment think fit to go in for. Still less will I abandon the right of remonstrance against a policy which

I regard as dangerous or mischievous, like that for instance of his late pamphlet. He has the secret unknown to me of justifying himself in doing and saying one day the exact opposite to what he did the day before. As I don't understand the art I shall not follow that course, and I am sincerely sorry for those who, like yourself, think yourselves bound to go wherever the Will-o'-the-Wisp may lead you. I hope you may not be choked in the quagmire.

If Gladstone flings himself into the arms of the Radicals he cannot expect that moderate men will follow him.

However we will talk more of these things when we meet at Seacox Heath. Meanwhile I go to sleep more easily than you can do, who do not know whether you may not see in any morning's *Times* a manifesto or a pamphlet which will bind you like the Vatican Decrees to obey your Pope and declare for the destruction of the Monarchy, the House of Lords, or the House of Commons (as he no longer has a majority there) or the Church.

Happily, however, as is the case of the Papists, the "*loyalty*" even of the late Cabinet is not so unreasonable as it professes to be, and I firmly believe that you would think three times at least before you killed your wife and family even at the command of Gladstone and G. Glyn.

Goschen to Harcourt.

SEACOX HEATH, *January* 7.—George is much disappointed at hearing that Loulou is not to appear on Saturday, we thought it quite settled and I am sorry to lose *your* visit. . . . A "more convenient season" is, I fear, a scriptural phrase for indefinite postponement.

Less ambitious than you, I do not propose to act any part myself. I am so deficient in histrionic talent that I cannot even act in the House of Commons, a very great drawback in these days.

Thanks for your political letter. You once paid me the compliment of saying that I was the only member of the late Cabinet to whom you could speak your mind straight out, without meeting anger or annoyance. And you judged rightly that I like to *hear* both sides, and of course I am glad to know what is passing in your breast, even when it takes the form of the strongest antipathy to my late Chief and his colleagues, of whom I was one. But it is difficult to know how to deal with your frank confidences.

If Gladstone returns as leader, as I hope he will, and if the breach widens between yourself and Gladstone, as it must do, you and I must be in opposite camps, and you are supplying information to the enemy. Of course I treat your letter as confidential; yet your attitude of increasing hostility is a circumstance which of course I cannot exclude from my mind in discussions which may arise, as to what ought to be done. Don't misconstrue what I say. My only wish is to be perfectly loyal to you when receiving confidence, yet

loyal to Gladstone if he returns to the House and maps out a campaign.

Goschen to Harcourt.

SEACOX HEATH, *January* 8.—In denouncing the definition of loyalty, which rightly or wrongly you put into Glyn's mouth (I admit that he has sometimes taken an exaggerated Gladstonian view), you denounce a kind of feeling which I myself entirely repudiate and which most of my late colleagues would probably equally demur to. Your definition is a very great exaggeration.

You have constantly told me that the late Cabinet always deferred to Gladstone and you seem to think that we could hardly call our souls our own, that he was our Pope, in fact. That is historically incorrect, but that is comparatively immaterial at present.

No one would hold—certainly not Gladstone himself nor the super-Gladstonian Wolverton—that if Gladstone were to return to-morrow with a programme of disestablishment loyalty would require anybody to follow him. The result would be an honest, open, and avowed split, that is quite certain.

Of course every member of the party—and ex-colleagues as much as anybody—has a perfect right to protest publicly and privately, if on important questions a real divergence of opinion exists. . . .

There is an immense interval between the general feeling of hostility towards Gladstone's whole course of action, the pleasure in his reverses, and the determination to do what can be done to keep him out of office, which you expressed to me in the train coming from Scotland, and the state of mind which you, most contrary to fact, attribute to me, of being ready to follow a will-o'-the-wisp into any quagmire to which it may stray.

With the formal announcement by Gladstone of his resignation of the leadership, the question of a successor occupied the field of discussion. The course of the public discussion is summed up in Tenniel's famous cartoon, "The Bow of Ulysses," published in *Punch* (February 6), which represented Hartington engaged in trying to bend the bow, and Harcourt, Goschen, Lowe and Forster behind awaiting their turn. That was the outside view, but behind the scenes the choice was narrowed down to Hartington and Forster. Harcourt was a whole-hearted Hartington man, and he put into the candidature the enthusiasm which the candidate himself, characteristically, lacked. Writing to Harcourt on January 17, Hartington said:

Hartington to Harcourt.

I have to thank you for your letter; the more because since last March you have taken a position in the House of Commons which certainly would entitle you to consider yourself a candidate for the vacant place.

The time since Gladstone's retirement is short; but I have already heard enough to convince me that if leadership of the Opposition as a whole is to be attempted at all it must be brought about not by its assumption by myself or by any one else, or by the dictation of the late Cabinet, but by the Party itself after consultation and consideration of the many difficulties of the position. I do not myself feel certain that leadership of the Opposition as a whole is either possible or desirable, or that an arrangement which would recognize the real state of affairs among us might not be preferable. The Opposition consists of Whigs, Radicals and Home Rulers, and a recognition of that fact would save us all from many embarrassments, and might possibly enable us to resist any really mischievous policy of the present Government, at least as efficiently as if we were nominally united. . . .

The only point on which I have at all made up my own mind is that I would not accept the nominal leadership, unless the proposal were made with the general concurrence of the leading men in and out of the late Government.

"I am glad you think me 'bumptious,'" wrote Harcourt to Argyll (January 20) from Nocton Hall, where he was staying with Lord Ripon." It is the virtue of the young, and you know I have not yet sown my 'Parliamentary wild oats.' . . . How dear old Johnny (Russell) must be chuckling at Gladstone's overthrow. What is satisfactory to me is to think that it does not signify two peas except that one sleeps a little sounder at night, now that Gladstone cannot announce a new Resolution at breakfast." To Dilke he writes:

Harcourt to Dilke.

NOCTON HALL, LINCOLN, *January* 20.—I entirely agree with you about Fawcett. His situation in nailing his colours to Gladstone's mast just as he was going to the bottom was ridiculous in the extreme. The truth is that Fawcett has many merits, but is wholly devoid of political judgment. He said to me at Cambridge in December, "Well, you go in against G. and I for him; we shall see which will win." And we have seen. Fawcett positively believed that the Vatican pamphlet was a great *coup*. Is it possible to be more blind?

I am sincerely glad G. is gone. Whatever happens things can't be

worse than they were under his sudden impulses and unintelligible policy. What will happen God only knows—or perhaps the Devil. I am keeping out of it all. Since the smash I have not been a day in London, and don't mean to be till Parliament meets. I hate club gossip. It is so ridiculous and altogether without influence. It is pull devil pull baker between Hartington and Forster. As you know I prefer the first, and I am not sure you would not likewise. However I mean to have no finger in the pie.

But having "no finger in the pie" did not mean that his unquiet spirit slumbered. His appetite for controversy was insatiable, and he wrote anonymously to *The Times* on the constitutional doctrine of the election of an Opposition leader. In one letter (January 30) which he signed "A Sheep without a Shepherd," he urged that Granville and Bright should have consulted with their late colleagues and that they should make a recommendation to the Party. He was evidently afraid that the vote at the Party meeting would go against Hartington, for to Dilke he writes:

. . . Bright has made a *fiasco* at Birmingham. All the fat is in the fire. The odds which were on Hartington are now on Forster—Fawcett agitating furiously for F. *in odium swellorum*. As at present advised I shall not go to the meeting.

However, next day Forster withdrew from the contest for leadership, and when the meeting of the Liberal members was held on February 3, Hartington was elected unanimously and Harcourt was content. For a year he had been working for the retirement of Gladstone and the substitution of Hartington, and both objects were now accomplished. A curious sidelight is thrown on these proceedings by the postscript to a letter from Lyon Playfair to Granville (January 15), printed in Lord E. Fitzmaurice's *Life of Granville*:

The real meaning of the anxiety expressed is the following: Lord Hartington is looked upon as a nominee of Harcourt and James, to be used in the equational proportion—Lord George Bentinck: Disraeli:: Hartington: Harcourt. That is at the bottom of the agitation. But there is enough spirit of conciliation for the "independents" to accept Lord H. or A.B.C. provided it is done gently and with the concurrence of the Party.

The Earl of Lytton, writing to Harcourt from Paris, congratulated him on the course of events, observing: "I hope that Lord Hartington will be your temporary leader. A good *roi fainéant* is sometimes as great a desideratum as a *maire du palais*. You stand foremost in the order of Succession, and whenever the throne is next vacated I shall expect to see you ascend."

The Session was singularly humdrum, and there was no issue like that of the Public Worship Bill to engage Harcourt's love of battle. He spoke well and wisely in support of Osborne Morgan's resolution that interments should be permitted in churchyards either without any burial service or with services conducted by ministers of other denominations than the Established Church. He pointed out that the right had been conceded to Ireland and ought not to be withheld from this country. He "declined altogether to link the living body of the Church of England with dead and decaying privileges, for, if the two were inseparable, many a man would be driven to the conclusion that the cause of that Church was indefensible."

There was an amusing echo of the Ritualistic controversy of the previous year after the Session was over. Disraeli wrote to Harcourt from Wortley Hall, Sheffield, as follows:

Disraeli to Harcourt.

September 13.—Where are you? and is there a chance of your being in the South on the 28th of this month? And if disengaged, could you give me the great pleasure of coming to Hughenden?

My new Church is to be opened on the 29th, and the Bishop will be with me, who was created by your friend Mr. G. and is very high, and I hear there is to be a procession of stoled priests, of great length.

I must have some of the reformed faith present to keep me in countenance, and you, being the grandson of an Archbishop, may please all parties. I hope the Duchess of Sutherland will support me. But that is not enough. Women, even she, may have æsthetical seizures, and to ensure my safety, I require your masculine Protestantism. Pray come if you can. It will recall old days.

Harcourt's reply (September 17) was couched in the same slightly irreverent vein:

Harcourt to Disraeli.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *September* 17.—An invitation to Hughenden would attract me from the uttermost parts of the earth, for there is no place which has for me so great a fascination. I suppose it was an instinct of this magnet which brought me back yesterday from Switzerland to find your letter awaiting my return.

Yes, I shall come with the greatest of pleasure. I was saying to a friend the other day that I believe I ought to regret for many reasons that you were Minister, but that in fact the reason for which I most deplored it was that now I had no occasion of seeing you.

You have most amiably anticipated my wishes and not deferred them to the days, I fear too remote, of your opposition.

As I am fresh from Geneva and Zermatt and Basle and Worms, I shall be ready to do battle by your side in the good cause, and if need be to shy a stool at the head of the mass-mongers. I wish a round dozen of Bishops would be translated in chariots of fire in order that you might fill the Bench with some better stuff than that with which it has been recently recruited. Just now I think the material of that seat quite as important as that of the Treasury Bench.

Don't you think it would have a good effect if you appeared on this occasion in your Oxford D.C.L. robes, and I will bring a Geneva gown from Cambridge.

Though I shall be charmed to take part in your ecclesiastical pageant, I can't accept it in exchange "for the happier time of social converse ill exchanged for power." And some time or other I hope we may have another day alone in Bradenham Chase and talk over the strange things which have happened and are to happen.

You have made England dreadfully dull, which I suppose is the true test of *national* happiness.

But *individually* you owe us compensation.

After the visit to Hughenden Harcourt returned to Scotland, where he had been with Henry James at Millais's shooting-lodge. Afterwards he was at Balcarres, Colinsburgh, from whence he wrote to his son :

Harcourt to his Son.

BALCARRES, *October* 14.—I must write you a line on my birthday. I think you know that in all the years of my life, you, my darling, have been my greatest happiness and joy. And your dear mother left you to me as both a trust and a consoler. We have been very happy in each other's love, and shall always be so as long as God is pleased that we should live together. I cannot remember that either has ever given the other a moment's sorrow or pain, and that will always be a happy thing for both to remember whatever may happen to us in the future.

The weather is so bad here that I have determined to return to London to-morrow, so I shall very soon see you again, dearest. I will send you a telegram when I am coming down.

II

During the Session Hartington had justified his appointment to the leadership of the Party, but the intentions of Gladstone were still the subject of speculation. Writing to Harcourt from Chatsworth (November 21), Hartington says :

. . . Mr. Gladstone is here, and seems a good deal interested in politics. The position of Egypt in regard to the Turkish repudiation, the Admiralty, and Mr. Froude's proceedings at the Cape are his great political topics at present.

Four days later Hartington, writing to Harcourt from Studley Royal, returns to the subject of Gladstone :

. . . I don't *much* think that Gladstone meditates a return to politics. He certainly takes greater interest in secular affairs than I expected ; but then he is profoundly impressed with the rotten state of the Liberal Party.

Harcourt went to Chatsworth in the following month, and, writing on his return to London to Lord Houghton, says :

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *December* 21.—. . . I was at Chatsworth last week where the governing race are I think much pleased at the success of the young Julius in his lead. He gains strength and popularity every day. The truth is the real political sentiment of the country is neither Conservative nor Radical, but Whig to the backbone.

How Dizzy must curse the prosaic Derby for having *désillusionné* the world on the subject of the Suez Canal. That affair has almost blown over.

The allusion is to the purchase of the Suez Canal shares, which in the general poverty of the ministerial achievements had been magnified into a miracle of Disraelian wizardry. Every one knows to-day the facts about that excellent, but absurdly trumpeted transaction, how, learning that the Khedive's shares were in the market, Frederick Greenwood, then editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, urged and induced Disraeli to buy them, and with what oriental magnificence the simple affair was invested for the public benefit. Unfor-

tunately Lord Derby (the Stanley of the Apostolic days, for whose plain honesty Harcourt always showed the highest respect) had, as Foreign Secretary, put the matter in its true and modest light, and pointed out that the real power of England in Eastern affairs depended not on Canal shares, but on the British fleet. Harcourt made great play with this conflict between the blunt Englishman and the Oriental magician when he came to deal with the subject at Oxford on the last day of the year (December 31). It was the first of three speeches he had engaged to deliver to his constituents. He was in his liveliest vein, and greatly shocked *The Times*, which thought that if he had been content with fifty "laughs" instead of 500, he would better have consulted the gravities of public life. In fact, the speech was a most damaging criticism of the actions of the Government. He denounced the Army Regimental Exchanges Bill as instinct with the very worst spirit of exclusive privilege, showed the inadequacy of the amendment of the Labour laws, and spoke very forcibly on the maladministration of the Navy and on the Merchant Shipping and Judicature Acts. It was a serious speech dressed in gay apparel; but it was nowhere more gay than in its allusion to the Suez Canal shares:

> Since the speech of the Foreign Secretary, the whole aspect of the question has been completely changed, both at home and abroad. Up to that time a sort of glamour had invested a very plain business with the unnatural haze that distorts the true proportion of things. There was something Asiatic in this mysterious melodrama. It was like the *Thousand and One Nights*, when in the fumes of incense, a shadowy genie astonished the bewildered spectators. The public mind was dazzled, fascinated, mystified. We had done, we did not know exactly what, we were not told precisely why, *omne ignotum pro magnifico*. . . .
>
> England had at last resumed her lead among the nations. The Eastern question had been settled by a *coup d'état* on the Stock Exchange and Turkey was abandoned to her fate. Egypt was annexed. The Bulls of England had vanquished the Bears of Russia. Moab was to be our washpot, and over Edom we had cast our shoe. France and Mr. Lesseps were confounded. We were a very great people, we had done a very big thing; and, to consum-

mate the achievement a Satrap [1] from Shoreham, attended by a pomp of financial Janissaries, was despatched to administer the subject provinces of the English Protectorate on the Nile. . . .

We, all of us, felt some six inches taller than before. We spread our tails like peacocks to the sun, and were as pleased as children at our soap-bubble, iridescent with many hues. But, all of a sudden, this beautiful vision melted away; the Egyptian mirage evaporated; the great political phantasmagoria faded like a dissolving view. . . . Lord Derby is a great master of prose, and he has translated the Eastern Romance into most pedestrian English.

The second of the three New Year speeches was devoted to Oxford subjects, and the third, to the local Liberal Association on January 10, was a homily on party discipline. The programme makers were a nuisance, and the duty of a good Liberal was to trust to his chiefs and not to embarrass them by wild flights. The main interest of the speech was as showing a change of heart. Indeed, the December speech, with its determined attack on the Disraeli Government, had already indicated a disposition to cease the "sowing of wild oats" deprecated by Gladstone.

Probably the change and the enthusiasm for discipline were due to the cordiality of his relations with the new leader. What those relations were is indicated in a letter from Hartington on the Oxford speeches:

Hartington to Harcourt.

Devonshire House, *January* 11, 1876.—As we were in labour together, although I was in the most advanced stage, you must let me congratulate you on the safe delivery of your triplets. The first and third I consider very fine infants. You will probably forgive me if I confess that I did not get far with the second.

I think that you ought to be especially pleased with the wrath which you kindled in the breast of *The Times* and some other papers, which I imagine are beginning to think that their raptures over the Suez business were a little premature. The only fault I have to find is that you were a great deal too complimentary to me, and the unfortunate Party will begin to entertain hopes of me which will soon be disappointed. However I am really grateful for all you said. You have backed me up in the line which I took, or attempted to take,

[1] Mr. (afterwards Sir) Stephen Cave, M.P. for North Shoreham, was sent to Egypt in December 1875 with Colonel (afterwards Sir) John Stokes, R.E., to report on the financial situation.

and I shall begin soon to think that I have got a policy which will set the Party on its legs again.

If you should be in London the next two days, I should be very glad to see you and have a little talk.

A letter on the preceding Christmas Day from Henry James shows how, in spite of his occasional explosions, Harcourt could endear himself to those who saw most of him and knew him best. In the course of the letter James said, "I cannot let the year close without saying to you what a pleasure it is to me to feel that our friendship and the prospect of united action year by year increase. I often feel how deficient I am in many qualities required for political life, and it is entirely my association with you that gives me heart to endeavour to maintain my position."

III

But the smoother waters into which the Liberal Party had entered were soon disturbed, and Disraeli retaliates on Harcourt for his levities in regard to the Suez Canal shares. A sudden squall appeared from a wholly unexpected quarter. In the previous July the Admiralty had issued a circular revising the General Slave Instructions issued to the officers of the Navy. This circular appeared to reverse British policy, for it provided that, though a captain might receive fugitive slaves on board his ship, he should, when the ship entered a port of the country from which the slave had escaped, surrender him on a properly authorized demand. This circular aroused violent opposition in the country. It was denounced by Henry James in a speech at Taunton, and on November 4 "Historicus" published a letter in *The Times* supporting James's argument and adducing new authorities. He made it clear that, as foreign jurisdiction did not run on a British warship even in territorial waters, the captain of a British ship could not do otherwise than administer British law on that ship, and that, as British law did not admit of slavery, a slave once on board a British ship could not be handed over as a slave. The letter promised a new instalment for the next day,

which did in fact appear. But in the meantime the offending circular was withdrawn.

Contemporary journalism not unnaturally ascribed the withdrawal of the instructions to the attack of "Historicus," but there is some evidence that the decision was not so sudden as appeared. The *World* commented that the two letters showed what a great lawyer had been lost by Harcourt's choice of a political career. "If a man could write those two letters after spending a couple of days in a library with a smart and intelligent amanuensis, what might he not have done had Fortune led him to make the law his serious study."

But though the first round had been won in the battle over the Slave Circular, the fight was not over. The new circular issued by the Admiralty in place of the documents which had been so severely criticized proved to be only less unsatisfactory. The question was debated in Parliament in January. Harcourt objected to the new circular on the ground that while the first assumed that we were bound to surrender the slaves by the obligations of positive law, the second directed them to be handed over to their masters except under special circumstances, while admitting that there was no legal obligation. No doubt every country had a right to lay down the conditions on which our ships of war would be received in their ports, but we could refuse to be bound by those conditions, and it was open to them to decide whether they would take the risk of quarrelling with us. Disraeli agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission to consider the question, but declined to suspend the circular pending the report of the Commission.

So far the struggle had gone well for the Opposition. They had precedent for them and public opinion with them, and a formal attack was to be made on February 6. But at this moment the friends of the Government disinterred a most disastrous fact. A similar circular to that first issued had been promulgated by the late Government. The commotion caused by this discovery will be readily understood.

Harcourt wrote to tell Granville that Egerton, the Secretary to the Admiralty, who had first made the announcement,

had told him that he had referred to similar instructions sent out from the Foreign Office by Lord Clarendon. The next day (January 17) he told Granville he had received a copy of the circular of 1871, which was nearly identical in terms with the one against which he himself had been fulminating. The law officers of the Gladstone Government, Coleridge and Collier, he said, denied all knowledge of it. Granville replied that to be forewarned was to be forearmed, and that he would ask the Foreign Secretary to let him have a copy of the papers. Hartington meanwhile had spoken on the subject at Bristol, though without committing himself too deeply. "How lucky," he wrote to Harcourt (January 19), "that A. Egerton and the newspapers let the cat out of the bag, instead of keeping it to let loose on us in the House." Two days later Harcourt wrote to Granville saying how deeply disturbed even moderate Liberal opinion was by the revelation, and that it was obviously impossible for himself and James to recede from the opinion they had expressed, not only because the whole of professional opinion that mattered was on their side, but because the legal point at issue, the immunity of the Queen's ships in foreign ports, was vital to the maritime supremacy of England. He went on to say:

Harcourt to Granville.

14, Stratford Place, *January* 21.—. . . Cairns has felt the stress on this part of the argument, and has adopted our view in the 2nd Circular.

My objection to the 2nd Circular is one not of *law* (for our law has been incorporated into it), but of *policy*.

Of course the Orders of 1871 make the situation in a Party point of view very difficult. But the country will not stand either the Circular of 1871 or those of 1875. I think they must all be thrown overboard bodily, and the matter settled on national grounds. There is in my opinion only one sound principle, viz. that a *slave once voluntarily received on board a Queen's ship can under no circumstances be given up by the Queen's officers*. I at least can support no other doctrine in the H. of C. . . .

I fear that the scrape of 1871 as of 1875 is mainly due to the ramshackle and hugger-mugger way in which the law business of the F.O. is conducted, and against which I wrote a memorandum in my brief term of office. Under such a system everything is

possible. The mere fact that the policy of the country should be left to the mercy of such a wretched incapable as —— is enough to make one shudder, and his successor is if possible worse. I had meant to say something on that subject at Oxford, and regret now I did not, as it would have covered our disaster.

This was the real history of the escape of the *Alabama* and of I know not how many other miscarriages.

If this business forces a reform of the administrative system it will not be altogether without its use.

In the debate on February 20 on Whitbread's motion for the withdrawal of the circular, the Government spokesman, while offering a Royal Commission, made great play with the circular of 1871. Harcourt spoke in the "Historicus" vein. He insisted on the danger of the Government policy, which virtually abandoned the principle that the Queen's vessels were extra-territorial. He repeated his point that foreign nations might decide on what terms they would admit British men-of-war to their ports, but England might say on what terms she accepted that hospitality, and, having once made that declaration, foreign Powers, if they still admitted British ships, tacitly admitted the justice of the British standpoint. In the debates in both Houses the view put forward by "Historicus" in *The Times* carried much weight, and finally after the Royal Commission had reported, a third circular was issued which removed the scandal of the earlier documents.

But the episode had not passed without one of those squalls which were not infrequent in Harcourt's tempestuous career. He and James had been invited to a meeting of the late Cabinet for consultation on the Slave Circular difficulty. Harcourt declined the invitation, and decided to withhold further papers which he had prepared in connection with the Amendment to the Address until he and his friend had learned what decisions had been reached. "We cannot," he wrote wrathfully to Hartington (February 4), "accept the position of being treated with *half confidence*. You must remember that we are out of our teens, and that we cannot (as James truly says) 'be sent for like children at dessert time.'" Hartington replied placably that if they

irritable

had attended the meeting they would have been able to take part in the general discussion. "Of course you have a perfect right to say that you will not join in our meetings at all, unless you are invited to all. But other members of the Party have a right to say the same, and we must face the difficulty either of making a selection which cannot help being invidious, or of forgoing a great deal of assistance which we cannot well dispense with."

Harcourt replied (February 5) heartily dissociating Hartington from any intention to slight James and himself, but hinting that Granville, "who has chosen to place our present relations on the most distant footing," had not been equally blameless. He proceeded:

Harcourt to Hartington.

. . . But all this is the fringe of the thing. The real matter against which I intended to protest and against which I still protest is the exclusive pretensions of the gentlemen who call themselves the "late Cabinet" to direct and control the policy of the Opposition. That assumption could not be put forward in a more prominent way than by distinctly intimating to us that whilst we might be heard upon one point we were to be turned out of the room on all others whilst the "late Cabinet" at the commencement of a new session resolved upon the general policy of the party.

For my part I know nothing of the "late Cabinet." They were dissolved by the election of 1874 which was their last great work. They have ceased to exist. I cannot recognize them as a body of *vieux émigrés* sitting *en permanence* on the banks of opposition longing to return, having "learnt nothing and forgotten nothing."

I don't think the sagacity with which they conducted the fortunes of the Liberal Party in the last Parliament entitles them to assert that their voice and their voice alone shall be heard to counsel its leaders in this. I confess from my observation I should look with horror on a unanimous decision of the "late Cabinet" as a thing which would probably herald some great disaster. Two-thirds of them are in the House of Lords and know nothing of the House of Commons. The other third consist of gentlemen who do not agree on any single point of important public policy. If you will keep your ears open, talk to those you think fit, and exercise your own sound judgment, I believe you will come to much wiser conclusions than you will ever derive from this high and mighty and exclusive conclave. I do not know who is the author of the dogma that the leader of the Opposition is to consult only with ex-Cabinet Ministers on the general policy of the Party. That theory shows a great

ignorance of political history. (Dizzy always says that the worst thing in our days is that no one knows anything of political history.) There is no such rule and never has been any such practice. Men almost as great as Granville acted on different principles. [Then follow historical examples.]

This rule then has never before been acted upon. It is invented now for the first time to keep the sole influence and control of the policy of the party in the hands of a few gentlemen who think themselves entitled to its monopoly. For my part I protest against that unfounded pretension.

Sitting on the front bench I shall always feel it my duty as it is my pleasure loyally to support you as the leader of the party whether you consult me or whether you do not. I regard you as the person to whose judgment I shall look. But I know nothing, and I mean to know nothing of the "late Cabinet" as a body to whom I owe any sort of allegiance. And, judging from the past, I should doubt if you could have more unwise guides in the future. You will see therefore that my protest goes to the root of the whole matter.

This pretension on the part of the "late Cabinet" if it was not a nullity would be an impertinence. It is a novelty and a solecism in politics.

Now I have said all my disagreeable things in writing in order that we may have, as we always have had, nothing but pleasant things to talk about.

Hartington, like the sensible man he was, spoke to Granville about the "distant footing," whereupon Granville wrote a pretty note to Harcourt assuring him of his good feelings:

Granville to Harcourt.

18, CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE, *February* 5, 1876.— . . . We are very old friends. At times I have been annoyed at the strong terms of condemnation you have applied to personal and political friends, with whom we were both serving, but you have always been friendly and courteous to me. I have as high an opinion as any one of your ability, knowledge, and power of speaking and writing, and you have had proof during the last fortnight of my desire to know your opinions. It will be your fault and not mine, if for the future we are not as good friends as we have ever been.

Harcourt, who had almost as much delight in making up a quarrel as in having one, promptly wrote (February 6) to Hartington saying that all personal difficulties were removed, expressing his regret if his absence from the ex-Cabinet meeting has caused him inconvenience, and adding, "Please put my long letter to you of yesterday in the fire lest it

should one day, fifty years hence, appear in the *Life and Times of the Marquis of Hartington*!" It was not destroyed by Hartington, and is put in the Life and Times of Sir William Harcourt instead because it helps to an understanding of his hot-tempered, but very human and essentially good-natured character.

IV

While the struggle over the Fugitive Slave Circular was in progress, Disraeli brought in the Royal Titles Bill (February 17). In doing so he did not indicate the style which the Queen proposed to adopt in connection with the government of India, and it was only on the second reading that it was announced that Her Majesty was about to become Empress of India. The proposal was received with much disfavour by the Liberals, and Harcourt, who was always hostile to the spirit and forms of Imperialism, wrote to Hartington:

Harcourt to Hartington.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *March* 11.—It is becoming hourly more clear that the question of the Royal Titles is becoming very serious and you will have to determine what to do about it.

To judge by the press and the tone of all the people I have heard, I never knew so strong a feeling of dislike and opposition so rapidly developed. As to the repugnance of English sentiment to the change I think there can be little doubt.

Thinking over the matter as regards India I believe the measure will be most disastrous. It has been our settled policy to govern a great part of India through Princes whom we have always treated with respect in regard of their, at least nominal, independence. Subject to our intervention, when political necessity obliged, we have always carefully avoided any assertion of absolute sovereignty over them. The very argument used by Sir G. Campbell for the change is to my mind the strongest that can be adduced against it. Holkar, Scindia, the Nizam and the Rajpoots represent houses whose proudest tradition is that they successfully threw off the yoke of the Emperor of Delhi. To tell them that the Queen claims to revive that authority, which for a century and a half they have repudiated, is a complete and most dangerous change in the whole scheme of our Indian Government. And if it is advisable to make it, this is certainly not the way in which it should be done.

As far as my opinion goes I think we ought to resist and that we should have the country with us. The question remains how to do

it. It has occurred to me that some one might move some resolution on going into Committee to this effect:

> "That the House will not proceed with the Bill till it is furnished with some information as to the sentiments on the subject of the Princes and the people of India."

The great thing to fight for is time. I shall be ready if you wish it to speak against the Bill especially on the Indian argument.

To my mind it is the most *un*-Conservative proposal that ever was made.

The amendment moved by Hartington did not follow the lines suggested in Harcourt's letter, but was based on the ground "that it is inexpedient to impair the ancient and Royal dignity of the Crown by the assumption of the style and title of Empress." In the debate that followed Harcourt supported the amendment with a speech in which he developed the line of argument he had employed in his letter to Hartington.

While these events were occupying him in Parliament, Harcourt was engaged in a controversy in *The Times* with E. J. Reed and W. G. Romaine, on the subject of the Navy. In this discussion he opposed panic building, and examined the sufficiency of the fleet in relation to any conceivable combination against this country. Replying to the argument of the unprotected colonies, he foreshadowed the naval policy long afterwards adopted by Lord Fisher, insisting on the folly of "squandering our fighting fleet about the world among our distant possessions":

> The ironclad fleets of the world (he said) are in European waters, and it is there that we must be prepared to meet and to fight them or if necessary to follow them. It is in the North Sea, the Channel, the Bay, or the Mediterranean that the mastery of the seas will be decided now as it has been before. To keep a squadron of ironclads in India, Australia or the Cape in order to meet the fleets of Europe when they get there is a proposal against which it is hardly necessary to argue.

On another subject he had at this time the unusual distinction of being adopted by the Conservative Government as the official spokesman of their policy. In deference to the representations of Plimsoll, the enlightened advocate of the merchant seaman, a Merchant Shipping Bill was brought

in which extended the temporary measure passed the year before for the safety of merchant seamen, and brought Canada within the orbit of its regulations. Objection was raised to the proposal on the ground of Canadian autonomy in the matter of merchant shipping, and it was supported in *The Times*. Harcourt thereupon replied in the columns of that paper with an analysis of the Canadian Constitution, the purport of which was to show that Canada was bound by the legislation of the British Parliament on shipping questions. Selborne, writing to Harcourt (June 10), promised to do what he could in the House of Lords "to dispel the extraordinary misapprehension, which some ignorant writer in *The Times* has done so much to create," and added, "Your letter was very good; only one almost grudged the expenditure of so much good powder and shot upon ignorance so remarkable." The Colonial Office took the unusual course of issuing the letter as a White Paper, and the Bill was duly passed into law. It was not the last occasion on which Harcourt was to take action in the interests of the merchant seaman. When in 1880 Plimsoll resigned his seat at Derby in order to make way for him, Harcourt received the care of the seamen's interests as a kind of legacy, and threw himself into the work of the Merchant Shipping Committee of that year with characteristic enthusiasm.

At the close of the Session the political world was provided with something of a sensation by the announcement that Disraeli was going to the House of Lords as Earl of Beaconsfield. The curiosity aroused by the fact is indicated in a letter from Henry James to Harcourt:

Sir Henry James to Harcourt.

GLEN TULCHAN, *Sunday morning*.—Do write and tell me the gossip about it. Did you know of it? How well the secret was kept? They will never manage in the House without him. How relieved we shall all be at feeling he is not there to pitch into us. It puts you very nearly at the top, and you will be able to do just as you like. My earnest prayer is that it will not hasten our return to office. I shall retire into complete private life if it does.

"The House of Commons will be devilish dull without

the great Dizzy," wrote Harcourt to Butler. Replying to a friendly letter of good wishes from Harcourt, Disraeli wrote :

Disraeli to Harcourt.

August 20.—Lazy as one feels now—and I hope for the rest of August—I must thank you for your kind letter, for I know it comes from your heart.

I did not leave the House of Commons without a pang, I assure you, but, I think, the step may add a few years to my life, and I left my friends there as free, on the whole, from difficulties as one, in this age, could hope for.

If I had accomplished my original purpose, I should have closed altogether my public life, but, though I did not contemplate difficulties on this head, my purpose was found to be impossible.

We shall not meet quite so often as before, but we shall meet more intimately. That is the consolation of your friend D.

Shortly afterwards Harcourt went on a visit to Hughenden. "I am almost sorry you went to Dizzy's," wrote James to him from Paris. "Of course I know your devotion to him, but I think your visit is so likely to be misunderstood that I wish you had not gone." Instead of his customary visit to Scotland in the autumn, he went to Switzerland with his son, and at Grindelwald the two shared in a tragic episode on the glaciers. An English visitor named Bruncker was killed by an avalanche while gathering edelweiss, and the body was taken back to the hotel by the Harcourts, to whom the widow subsequently wrote a touching letter of thanks for their kindness. This holiday was the premonition of a change in the Harcourt *ménage* which had been imminent for some time. Harcourt had been a widower for thirteen years, during which his almost exclusive domestic concern had centred in his son. The question of the boy's education —for Eastbourne was only a health interlude—had become urgent. Harcourt had put him down for Eton, but in 1875 was still hesitating whether to send him there. Among the people he consulted was Lady Ripon, whose advice on both public and personal affairs had long exercised much influence upon his mind and whose affectionate interest in his son had deepened the relationship. Harcourt had consulted Cairns,

who had not been satisfied with his son's Eton education, and sent Cairns's letter to Lady Ripon, who replied :

Lady Ripon to Harcourt.

I return you Lord Cairns's letter. You will think me a very stupid, obstinate woman, but it has not altered my opinion. I do not believe and indeed do not wish that you should send him to Wellington College or any similar school, and I still think, under the peculiar circumstances, that you ought to make the trial of a public school. He would be close at hand ; you could, especially at first, be in constant communication with the doctor, and very little would escape your observation. I mean *sous le rapport physique*.

As to morals, it is a lottery what boys he associates with wherever he may go. But why do I prose, and above all share in the smallest degree so great a responsibility ? From my great affection, and fear that by avoiding this you will incur almost certain loss.

V

With the boy safely established at Eton, Harcourt now contemplated a change in his condition, and writing to Granville, who had written to him on the news that he was about to remarry, he said, " I am fortunate in having one whom I have known so long and so well to make a home for me and for him (his son). She is a good Liberal, and I hope will do her duty to the Party and its leaders."

The lady on whom his affections had fallen was Elizabeth Cabot Ives, the widow of Thomas Poynton Ives of Rhode Island, and daughter of John Lothrop Motley, the historian, Minister of the United States in London. Harcourt had long been acquainted with the Motleys, who were frequent visitors at Strawberry Hill. Lady St. Helier in her *Memories and Recollections*, describes Motley as " one of the most picturesque and remarkable men I have ever seen. . . . As he came into the room it seemed almost as if the most magnificent Vandyck you could imagine had stepped out of its frame," and his daughter as " an extraordinarily pretty young widow." She had seen much of the world and its greatest figures, having lived chiefly with her father on the Continent and at Washington. A pleasant glimpse of how the great news was received by one who was most

deeply concerned in it is given in a letter from Lady Ripon to Harcourt :

Lady Ripon to Harcourt.

STUDLEY ROYAL, *November* 20.—I must tell you that I had a beautiful letter from Loulou yesterday, but as he particularly begged me with many dashes not to let anyone see it, I destroyed it. I thought you would not mind my writing to him, and I am very glad I did, for he evidently wanted some one to speak to.

He was so surprised when you told him that he did not hear the name, and begs me to send him immediately every particular, which I have done. There never was, I am sure, a child like him. "To please and help him is my aim," are his exact words. I do not think he is unhappy. He says he should much like to talk it all over with me, but that he supposes by Christmas that it will be all over.

"My dear friend, you know how from my heart I wish you all and every happiness," wrote Henry James on hearing the news—"exactly as much though only as you deserve for all your goodness and thoughtfulness towards others. One word of warning please give, that if I am not allowed to rush into Stratford Place at unreasonable hours to ask your advice, in fact to do just as I did before, there will be broken windows or something worse."

Owing to the recent death of Harcourt's mother, the marriage, which took place on December 2, was quite private, but there is a description of it in a letter from Motley to Oliver Wendell Holmes printed in the *Motley Correspondence* :

BRIGHTON, *January* 30, 1877.—I have three letters, delightful ones, as your letters always are, to acknowledge. The very last was one regarding Lily's marriage, and it gave her and her husband much pleasure. I wish you could have witnessed the marriage, for to an imaginative, poetical, and philosophical nature like yours, the scene would have been highly suggestive. It was strictly private, on account of deep mourning in both families. It was in Westminster Abbey, because Dean Stanley is a very dear and intimate friend of ours and also of Harcourt's. No one was invited, except one or two nearest relatives, and it was necessary courteously to decline all applications from representatives of the Press. The ceremony was performed in Henry VII's gorgeous and beautiful chapel, dimly lighted by a rain-obscured December sun. The party stood on the slab covering Edward VI's tomb, and at the Dean's back was the monument in which James I had his bones placed

along with those of Henry VII, the first Stuart fraternizing in death with the first Tudor. The tombs of Mary Queen of Scots and of Elizabeth were on either side. As there were but very few people sprinkled about in sombre clothing, one could hardly realize amid all this ancient dust and ashes that a modern commonplace marriage was going on. Afterwards the wedding party went through the long-drawn aisle and beneath the fretted vault to the Jerusalem Chamber, where Henry IV died :—

> "How call ye the chamber where I first did swoon ?
> 'Tis called Jerusalem, my noble lord.
> In that Jerusalem will Harry die."

You remember all this, and would have thought of it as I did, as one was signing and witnessing the marriage in the dim and dusty old apartment, now a kind of record chamber to the Abbey. The business was soon despatched. The couple then drove down to Strawberry Hill, once the famous gingerbread Gothic castle of Horace Walpole, and now the property of Lady Waldegrave, Harcourt's aunt, who lent it to them for a part of their honeymoon.

The honeymoon, begun at Strawberry Hill, was continued in Paris, where Harcourt and his wife were accompanied by Loulou, who had acted as his father's best man.

CHAPTER XV

ON THE BRINK OF WAR

The Bulgarian Atrocities—The Berlin Memorandum—Gladstone's Bulgarian Campaign—Cross-currents in the Liberal Party—Lord Derby's policy—Hartington's Keighley speech—New Year Speech (1877) at Oxford—The War Panic—The Protocol of January 15—The Gladstone Resolutions—Conversations with Schuvaloff—Oxford Speech on the Turkish question—British Fleet ordered to the Dardanelles—Speech on the Vote of Credit—Preliminaries of European Conference—Employment of Indian troops—The Secret Treaties—Cyprus—Irish obstruction—Select Committee on Courts-Martial—Indian administration, the Fuller case—Social and Political life—Yachting in the Western Highlands.

WAR clouds were once more filling the European sky. Twenty years had passed since the Crimean War, and the harvest of that mischievous sowing was due to be gathered. The Turk had been rehabilitated in Europe, and had enjoyed an uninterrupted opportunity to set his house in order. But, as the opponents of the Crimean War had prophesied, the opportunity was not used, and in the spring of 1876 the Turkish volcano, in Lord Morley's phrase, burst into flame. There were revolts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Bulgaria against the barbarous misgovernment of those territories, and Serbia and Montenegro rose in arms. The Porte took refuge in the only weapon of government it understood, and the Bulgarian atrocities, described by the British agent who investigated them on the spot as the most heinous crimes that had stained the history of the century, were the result. Disraeli, who had the Jew's unalterable devotion to the Turk, scoffed at

the reports as "coffee-house babble," but the appalling facts were soon the common property of Europe.

Russia, Germany and Austria promptly took action. In the Berlin Memorandum of May 13, 1876, they agreed to impose on Turkey certain reforms to be carried out under European supervision, and they invited England, France and Italy to adhere to their policy. France and Italy assented. Disraeli refused, and the scheme fell through. From this action flowed the disastrous events of the following two years. The Porte, relying upon the disruption which Disraeli's refusal had effected in European policy, resisted reform. Russia was isolated, and a general conflagration seemed imminent. As the summer advanced and the truth about the Bulgarian atrocities became known, public opinion in England was roused to unprecedented intensity of feeling. Gladstone again emerged from his retirement, issued early in September his famous pamphlet on "The Bulgarian Horrors," and addressed a great meeting at Blackheath. The Government, alarmed by the hostile current of public feeling, trimmed their sails, and powerful influences within the Cabinet, led by Derby and Salisbury, began to dissociate themselves from the pro-Turkish line of the Premier, who at Aylesbury in September declared that the agitation on behalf of the Bulgarians was as bad as the atrocities, talked about "secret societies," and said that the Serbians were quite unjustified in making war. Writing to Dilke, Harcourt said:

> STRATFORD PLACE, *October* 10.— . . . Dizzy's rubbish about "*secret* societies" should be translated "*public* opinion." I know you will not agree with me, but I am convinced whatever happens the Turk is done for, and I am glad of it. His domination like that of the *temporal power* of the Pope is an anachronism, and will dissolve itself in spite of all attempts to prop it up. There seem to me only two real alternatives, either a joint military and naval occupation by the Powers or a Russian invasion. The third thing, which is what our Government want, viz. to patch things up and tide it over for a time, is I think impracticable and will break down.

He was no more disposed than Gladstone to see this country and Europe involved in another Crimean War. His

anti-Russian feeling had faded, and his intimacy with Count Schuvaloff, the Russian Ambassador in London, had influenced his reading of events. The Count saw much of Lady Derby, the wife of the Foreign Minister, and from this source Harcourt, and through him the Opposition leaders, were kept informed of the progress of events within the Cabinet.

But although Harcourt shared the hostility to the Disraelian attitude and favoured the coercion of the Turk, he had little enthusiasm for the Gladstonian agitation. He was determined to keep Hartington in the Liberal leadership and Gladstone at Elba, and the latter's emergence from his self-imposed exile threatened to upset the plan on which Harcourt had set his heart. Hartington shared the disapproval of Disraeli's policy, but he shared it in his phlegmatic way and had no passion for the crusading spirit of Gladstone. While the latter was issuing his pamphlet and delivering his terrific invective at Blackheath, Hartington was at Constantinople, from whence in the course of a letter to Harcourt he writes:

Hartington to Harcourt.

CONSTANTINOPLE, *October* 2.— . . . Lord Beaconsfield's speech appears to me outrageous in tone and substance; and if it were the only ministerial deliverance I should say that we could not press too strongly for an autumn Session and protest against the policy of the Government. But Lord Derby's speeches, so far as I have yet seen them (I have not seen the last, reported by telegraph), seem to me very different in tone; and although I do not suppose that the policy of the Government will satisfy you and others who are for turning out the Turks without further delay, I imagine from what I hear here, that they are now ready to go quite as far as any other Power except Russia. . . .

Harcourt was against an autumn Session to censure the Government, on the ground of the disagreements within the Party. Writing to Granville (October 10), he said, "No doubt the Government have been greatly damaged in the last six weeks, but there is clearly a reaction setting in and surely Gladstone *more suo* is exaggerating the situation." In a livelier spirit he writes on the same day to Dilke at Toulon:

Harcourt to Dilke.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *October* 10.— . . . Things here are in the most damnable mess that I think politics have ever been in in my time. Gladstone and Dizzy seem to cap one another in folly and imprudence, and I don't know which has made the greatest ass of himself. Blessed are they that hold their tongues and wait to be wise after the event! To this sagacious policy you will see we, i.e. the Hartington section, have adhered and shall adhere.

I had a long letter from Hartington from Constantinople, full of his usual good sense and caution. I quite concur with him that though a strong case can be made against the Government for their obstinate *status quo* policy during the months of June, July and August there is little fault to be found with what they have been doing since Derby has taken the matter into his own hands in September.

There is a decided reaction against Gladstone's agitation. The Brooksite Whigs are furious with him and so are the commercial gents, whose pecuniary interests are seriously compromised. The Bucks election was a great snub for Dizzy. All the Rothschild tenants voted Tory, though to save his own skin Nat went on Carrington's Committee. Rothschild will never forgive Gladstone and Lowe for the Egyptian business. Chamberlain and Fawcett and the extreme crew are using the opportunity to demand the demission of Hartington and the return of Gladstone. But you need not be alarmed or prepare for extreme measures. There is no fear of a return from Elba. He is *played out.* His recent conduct has made all sober people more than ever distrust him. He has done two good things; he has damaged the Government much and himself still more. At both of which I am pleased and most of all at the last. . . .

It will be apparent that at this time Harcourt was torn between two contrary motives. He was determined to preserve the Hartington leadership, but his views on the main issue brought him, in spite of party considerations, into line with Gladstone's torrential crusade. Already that crusade had won its first victory. It had checked the pro-Turkish tendencies of the Government, and turned the current powerfully in the direction of peace. The fatal blunder of May, the rejection of the Berlin Memorandum, which broke up the possibility of concerted European action had been partially redeemed in September by Derby's declaration in favour of administrative autonomy for the afflicted provinces. But the battle was not over, and Harcourt, while anxious to

keep Hartington in the centre of the stage, was no less anxious that he should not appear hostile to the Gladstonian campaign. In anticipation of a speech by Hartington at Keighley, he wrote to him two suggestive letters in the course of which he said :

Harcourt to Hartington.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *October* 28.— . . . I hope you will not throw over our "atrocity friends" more than you think absolutely necessary as it will cause a good deal of dissatisfaction. I think the case is quite clearly made out that Derby did change his policy in August owing to the loud expression of public opinion. Indeed he said to one of the deputations "what has taken place in Bulgaria has no doubt greatly altered the relations of this Government and of other Governments to Turkey." Which admits the whole thing. And Disraeli's assertion at Aylesbury that the opinion of the country was not in accordance with the policy of the Government is a proof that if it now is less in disaccord it is because that policy now is changed. But what proves this most conclusively is the statement of Derby in September that he is now in favour of administrative autonomy and has pressed it on the Porte. The only point James missed was in not bringing out clearly that this very thing was proposed by Gortschakov in June. It is inconceivable that Derby should have declined this. And his refusal was no doubt the immediate cause of the Serbian War which broke out just ten days afterwards. I enclose some extracts in case you have not the book by you. As far as I can make out, the Russian proposals of June are precisely those of Derby in September !

What caused this change in Derby except two things. (1) The Serbian War ; (2) The atrocity agitation.

The whole question seems to have been from the first "can Turkey reform herself or is there any use obtaining pledges from her without further guarantee." I understand you to hold there is not. If not then these guarantees must come from without. . . .

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *November* 1.— . . . I don't know if you will feel disposed to animadvert on the strange policy of the Government in the last fortnight in giving out that they have "*retired* from all negotiations and left Russia face to face with Turkey" just at the time when Russia was pressing the very proposals which England had made. The demand of Russia for a six weeks' armistice *and* the English terms seems to have been a very fair one. The alteration brought forward by Turkey of a six months' armistice was evidently a dilatory evasion to escape the terms. If the English Government had supported instead of abandoning Russia in pressing their proposals all these last battles would have been avoided which

may very probably "harden the heart of Pharaoh" and lead to war by Russia. . . .

"You have steered a splendid course through the breakers and brought the party into smooth water," wrote Harcourt to Hartington (November 6) apropos of the Keighley speech. His appeal to him not "to throw over our 'atrocity friends'" had been observed, and when on January 9, 1877, Harcourt himself made a powerful speech on the subject to his constituents at Oxford he associated himself very cordially with the Gladstonian campaign. He was certain that the agitation of the previous autumn led by Gladstone had saved the Government from a dangerous error and the country from an enormous crime. The language used by Lord Beaconsfield on the subject of the Turkish barbarities had shocked the conscience of the country, and the country, by a profound instinct, had perceived that it was in danger of being committed to war on behalf of Turkey. The Government and their supporters had cowered before the storm, and they now denounced the instruments of their conversion to a better state of mind. They complained that "Gladstone has done it all." Harcourt replied:

> It was perfectly untrue that Mr. Gladstone was the author of the agitation. He approved it after it had spontaneously arisen, and his spirit could not but give it a gigantic impulse. Mr. Gladstone, in a long and distinguished life, had rendered memorable service to the State, but none would rank higher in the memory of the country than the record that he led the van of the nation while it dragged back a misguiding and misguided administration from the brink of the abyss into which they had all but precipitated the fortunes and the reputation of England.

He showed how the Serbian War was the direct outcome of England's earlier refusal to act with the other Powers, and how the Russian policy alone had now resulted in an armistice and a conference to which Lord Salisbury, a member of the Cabinet, had been sent to dictate peace to Turkey. Was there any reason why the armistice arranged in the last days of December should not have been arranged in the early days of June, but that England had refused to take the step

urged on her by all Europe in May? How much human misery would have been averted, how much blood, how much sorrow would have been spared?

We have been accused (he said) of enthusiasm for Russia. Sir, I reserve my enthusiasm for my own country alone. But if Russia were all that the Minister and his followers denounce her as being, the heavier is the condemnation which must attach to that imbecile policy which has made her the mistress of the situation—a policy which has presented her to Eastern Europe as the successful champion of humanity, mercy and civilization. A sagacious and far-sighted Government would have defeated the ambition of Russia and baffled her schemes by occupying the vantage ground which has been deliberately surrendered.

He expressed himself as far from sanguine of the results of the Conference.

One more attempt is to be added to the innumerable failures of the past to patch up Turkey. The measures which have been proposed by Lord Salisbury and his colleagues at Constantinople correspond very much to a commission of lunacy taken out against a dangerous imbecile, incapable of managing his own affairs, and very likely to do great mischief to his neighbours. . . . I am not one of those who believe in the leopard changing his spots or the Ethiopian his skin. We find ourselves face to face with this hopeless dilemma—either the remedies will be insufficient, and then the old story will recommence or, if they are efficient, they will annihilate Turkey. It is impossible to put this kind of new wine into the Ottoman bottles without bursting them to pieces. The Turk is what he always has been, and ever will be. The ultimate problem which still remains for European statesmanship is not how the Government of Turkey may be best maintained, but how it may be most safely replaced.

The fears in regard to the Constantinople Conference were justified. Beaconsfield's threatening words to Russia at the Lord Mayor's banquet in the previous November had very effectively defeated the Conference and Salisbury's attempts to put Turkey under control. The Eastern question was flung back into the cauldron, and the peril of a war against Russia on behalf of Turkey revived. Gladstone at the St. James's Hall and Harcourt in the columns of *The Times* thundered against the sinister turn of events.

II

The meeting of Parliament approached with a situation in which it seemed possible that the Government might demand war against Russia and the Opposition war against Turkey. Pro-Russian as he had become, Harcourt shrank from the latter possibility. Writing to Lord E. Fitzmaurice, he said :

Harcourt to Lord E. Fitzmaurice.

January 25, 1877.— . . . You cannot make war in this country unless you have with you a majority which amounts almost to unanimity. That was the strength of our position when we resisted successfully Disraeli's desire to embark us in war on the side of the Turk. But for the same reason it would be our weakness if the situation were reversed and we were the war party against Turkey. . . .

The question cannot be treated as if it were one of only Turkey on one side and Russia and perhaps England on the other. Is it possible to assert that it is not a contest in which all Europe would be engaged ?

I have had good reasons to learn that at all events Austria and, as far as she dares, France, have given all their sympathies to the Turks. What Bismarck means no one knows, but could we engage the country in war in total ignorance of who were our allies and who our foes ? Are we prepared to fight Austria and Turkey with a possible Germany on our flank, even with Russia as an ally. These are very grave questions and we must be prepared to answer them.

Gladstone evidently shrinks from speaking the word. Fawcett feels the difficulty as much as I do. He told me yesterday that he was not prepared (at least at present) to vote for war. What would Bright do ? Richard, as might be expected, says he cannot support force. Dilke, Wilfrid Lawson and, I understand, Cowen are against war, men like Mundella and others have all spoken strongly to me against any attempt to force the hands of the Government. . . . Even Chamberlain takes this opportunity to discourse on disestablishment, which does not look as if he had the Eastern question much at heart.

My advice is therefore that we should wait at least till Parliament meets. . . .

To Hartington he writes on the same day in the same vein, and a few days later (February 4) he urges both Hartington and Granville to " look at the story of the great collapse of Mr. Pitt in his attempt in 1794 to negotiate an anti-Russian and pro-Turkish alliance aganist Catherine when she was making the grand assault upon Turkey. The whole thing

is a marvellous parallel to the present state of affairs." Two days before the meeting of Parliament (February 8), Harcourt was convinced that the pro-Turks were "on the run." "Everything seems to me to concur in pointing to the policy of your holding firm and strong language now," he writes to Hartington. "The counsels of the Dizzy-*Pall-Mall-Daily-Telegraph*-Party are in confusion and they must be routed." The new factor in the case was the strong line taken by Salisbury, who had come back from the Constantinople conference filled with indignation at the contumacy of the Porte in refusing guarantees. "Neither Gladstone nor I have said anything stronger as to the effect of the refusal of the Porte upon the Treaty of 1856." He adds:

> . . . Salisbury's view in the Protocol of January 15 so completely meets our view that I should adopt it *en bloc*. Only I do not see that the conclusion from the premisses is a sound one. If Europe was bound to see that the Christians are protected, how can it retire from that obligation because the Turks refuse to conform to it? The conclusion should not be to do nothing. . . .

While the breach between the pro-Turks and the pro-Christians in the Government was widening, the Opposition position was consolidating. On the morning of the opening of Parliament, Harcourt wrote to Hartington pressing for a strong line. He had seen Dilke, Chamberlain and others of the advanced party, and they had all agreed that it was impossible to stand still, Chamberlain especially insisting on the necessity of England pressing the European concert to compel the Turks to yield. On the previous day there had been a meeting of the ex-Ministers at Granville's house and referring to that gathering W. E. Forster in his diary says:

> Harcourt, Argyll and Gladstone very hot, but final result general agreement that Granville and Hartington should press for further general action of the Powers, a European demand from Turkey with a threat of coercion: if not complied with, threat to be carried out. England to assent to and even initiate such action, but not to be committed to separate action with Russia.

With this policy uniting all the forces of the Opposition, the struggle in Parliament opened: but Harcourt's view that they had got the pro-Turks "on the run" soon proved to be

baseless. The Protocol, signed in London in March, failed, and Russia, left to act alone in defence of the Balkan peoples, declared war on Turkey on April 24. Once more the Disraelian policy seemed in the ascendant, and the Government, replying to Gortschakov, seized the opportunity of rebuking Russia for having taken "an independent and unwarrantable course." Harcourt, in the House (May 15), denounced this latest provocation of Russia, and being challenged from the Government benches to say whether the Opposition would join Russia now that she had declared war, said "No," but retaliated by showing how the Government had persistently defeated the efforts for a common European policy to coerce Turkey, and had so brought events to the brink of a European war.

Meanwhile Gladstone had thrown the Opposition in disorder by the production of his Resolutions, which Hartington could not endorse. Harcourt was furious. In sending "a few heads of arguments against G.'s Resolutions" to Hartington, he says:

14, Stratford Place, *April* 30, 1877.— . . . There never was a leader of a Party who has been placed in a more incessant series of awkward and disagreeable situations than it has been your lot to encounter. The patience, temper and courage you have shown you may rest assured have won for you and increased every day the esteem and confidence of your friends. . . . Depend upon it you will have plenty of "good men and true" who will stick by you to the last in your difficult job. . . .

In another letter to Hartington, written after seeing the lady who had become the recipient of Beaconsfield's most intimate thoughts, he says:

14, Stratford Place, *April*, 1877.—I saw Lady Bradford last night. She could not conceal her exultation at the news of Gladstone's motion. Small blame to her.

I heard also from a pretty safe Philo-Turk source that the civil war in the Cabinet is in full swing. Salisbury, Carnarvon, Derby and Northcote against Dizzy and his followers. My informant used the expression "Salisbury & Co. are such Gladstonites that Dizzy is thinking of breaking up the whole concern." He saw as clearly as we do that Gladstone's move will give Dizzy a decisive advantage over his peaceful colleagues. The thing really in its mischievous egotism and folly is past endurance.

The Resolutions were modified. In the great debate that followed the Opposition voted solid, and though the Government held their normal majority it seemed that the pro-Turkish party had been checked. Gladstone carried the fiery cross to Birmingham, and Harcourt, still fearful that the Opposition might be swept out of its pacific line, writes to Granville that he has a "great dread of the 'St. James's Hall' flag being hung out again." He is against a popular frenzy, wants "the commercial party to take the lead in the Peace movement," and with Mundella is organizing representations from the principal Chambers of Commerce. Throughout the autumn and winter, as the war between Russia and Turkey proceeded, feeling in the country hardened, with sympathy for the victims of Turkish misgovernment on the one side and with fear of Russia on the other. "What is the meaning of this early summons of Parliament?" wrote Hartington to Harcourt (December 19). "I suppose that Dizzy has at last had his way and we shall hear of some despatch, imposing limits to the Russian advance, and that we are to provide money for the consequences of a refusal."

III

The crisis of the long struggle had been reached. After five months of bitter war, of which the defence of Plevna had been the crucial incident, the Russian army had overwhelmed the Turkish resistance. The advance inflamed the anti-Russian feeling in England, and the music halls rang with the Jingo anthem "The Russians shall not have Con-stan-ti-no-ple." Before this wave of mob panic, the current of sympathy with the oppressed Balkan peoples set in motion by Gladstone gave way, and war seemed unavoidable. Harcourt, however, was confident that the forces for peace were too strong. Writing to Granville (December 24), he says that he learns that the Government "have no policy but to stave off the difficulty from day to day and from instant to instant," and that "Salisbury is *très content*

and in great spirits, considering that he has got his own way," adding :

> I think therefore that we may safely act on the conclusion that the meeting of Parliament is only an expedient to give an empty satisfaction to H.M. and her Vizier. . . . They (the Government) have never recovered the primordial blunder of the Berlin Mem. rejection. Since that fatal swagger they have never been able to retrieve their situation in the European Council. . . . I believe two things will come of this war (1) the dissolution of the Turkish Empire, and (2) the dissolution of this House of Commons.

Replying next day, December 25, " or ' the Nativity ' as Dizzy would date his letter," Granville says : " Your letter is a very sunshiny Christmas present. The only dark spot is the possibility at which you hint of an immediate break-up of the Ministry, as the pear is certainly not yet ripe for us. But it will take a long course of discredit really to break up the Conservative Party, and Dizzy if he fails in carrying whatever views he may have, will gracefully retreat from everything excepting the Treasury. . . . The war party of the Carlton are moving and sounding."

" My conviction is that the country will do anything for the Turks except fight for them, and everything against the Russians except make war upon them," Harcourt says in reply (December 27), adding that he has given a sketch of an address to Mundella for his Eastern Conference. " Let them fire away their powder, as it will test the real feeling of the country, and we shall know better where we are." " I had a long visit from N. Rothschild, who wanted to pump me," he writes to Hartington the same day, " but as there was no water in my well it was a process that failed. I think, however, I got out of him that the Government and even Dizzy have no idea of war." But on returning to London his confidence was shaken. To his wife he writes (December 31) : " The Russian Count (Schuvaloff) has just been with me for two hours and I have only just had time to scribble twelve sheets to Granville, and now I am off to post up *The Times*. The Russian refusal is absolute, and things go on from bad to worse. Schuvaloff is evidently much alarmed. . . ."

The memorandum to Granville was a lengthy record of his conversation with Schuvaloff, who said that the Government's insistence that Russia should treat with England alone as to the terms of peace with Turkey could only be intended to place his Government in a false position as having repulsed England in its endeavours to restore peace. In reply to Harcourt, Schuvaloff had vehemently repudiated the idea that Russia had designs on Constantinople, but while she was prepared to give a pledge not to *retain* Constantinople she would not undertake to abstain from attacking it for military purposes in order to compel Turkey to conclude peace—" otherwise," said the Count, " the Turks have nothing to do but to withdraw before the Russian armies, secure that at Constantinople they will find an ally in England."

The next day, New Year's Day, 1878, Harcourt was at Oxford addressing the Druids. " The situation was a difficult one," he wrote to Granville (January 2). " The Tories have got possession of the Druids, and I was in the presence of a hostile audience." He found the anti-Russian sentiment tremendously strong, " and if Dizzy can once fire the train the whole thing will blow up."

Harcourt to Granville.

. . . We have but one anchor to ride by, and that is the moderates in the Cabinet—if that parts, it is all over, a dissolution would destroy us—as it did the Peelites and Cobdenites on the China vote. Nevertheless, if we are driven to the position of the Rockingham Whigs in the early days of the American War, I am all for standing to our guns and resisting the modern Lord North. . . . I wish it could somehow be managed that the Russian terms should be made public so that we could refer to them. . . . Every one would be surprised at their moderation, and I think the country would say it was impossible to go to war against them. . . .

He was convinced from Schuvaloff's tone to him that Russia was at the end of her resources, and had only one object—to get out on the easiest terms possible—" if Dizzy will let them." In a postscript, he says :

I forgot to tell you that *The Times* is " in stays " and may go

on the other tack any day. I sent for Chenery (the new Editor) on Monday to tell him of the Russian reply to the English offers, and the moderating article of Monday was the result of our conversation. He is with *us* in his *own* opinion, but is timid in his new post and evidently thinks the popular gale is veering round to war, and if so he will bow to it. . . .

During the first days of the New Year events moved with gathering impetus, and in a long memorandum to Granville (January 6) Harcourt, who had again seen Schuvaloff, relates the course of events in the Cabinet, England's satisfaction with the pacific declaration of Russia, and readiness to recommend the Porte to apply for an armistice. "So far as it went therefore the Peace party prevailed in the last Cabinet." But Russia had stiffened, declining to treat as between Governments and insisting upon the matter being transacted between the commanders in the field. "And upon that the whole thing may break off. England is no longer bound to recommend the armistice, and Turkey may be encouraged to reject it, and so after all Dizzy will have gained his point."

You will have remarked that the objection to a *drum head* Conference has played a good part in the *D. Telegraph* for some days as a fatal objection to the Russian reply. That of course comes from Downing Street. It would certainly be lamentable if the thing went off on such a point, for of course the generals would only act by telegraphic communication to their Courts. However, there is another Cabinet to-morrow.

This stiffness on the part of Russia leads Harcourt to doubt whether Russia desires peace just now, and he describes how Schuvaloff fenced with his inquiry as to whether there was a danger of Russia's terms of the previous June being altered, and finally spoke of a Russian occupation of Bulgaria until a Christian governor was appointed. Harcourt pointed out the gravity of such a change, and Schuvaloff replied that as England had refused to discuss the terms in June she could not complain if they were altered now. "I have forwarded your letter, as full of meat as an egg, to Hartington," replies Granville (January 7). "It confirms one's

idea that the mismanagement of the whole thing has been wonderful. Can anything be more childish than that in this moment of the Turk's extremity *we* should be standing up for him on a point of etiquette in which I believe the Russians to be right. And why not hear the terms of last June?" Granville adds a warning:

> . . . Of course you will not let it be known that you have been in such close communication with Schuvaloff, and have suggested moves to Russia. But the suggestions have been most judicious and the information you have extracted is most useful.

In this connection, it may be well to recall that the fact of these conversations with Schuvaloff subsequently reached the ears of the Government, and on April 3 Derby wrote to Beaconsfield [1]:

> When Schuvaloff called to take leave of me on Monday he expressed a wish that I should communicate with you on the subject of a report which he had said reached your ears and which he supposed you believed to be true. It was to the effect that he had been in the habit of talking over official matters with members of the Opposition, especially with Vernon Harcourt. He denies having ever held any private conversations with them, or having talked about pending negotiations with any one except members of the Government. I told him he had better address his denial direct to you, but he preferred doing it through me, and I could not civilly refuse.

The denial throws an entertaining light on diplomatic veracity. It was through Schuvaloff that Harcourt was enabled to keep the Opposition in constant touch with the movement of events, and whatever may be said as to the proprieties of the matter the fact exercised a powerful and beneficent influence on the course of the struggle.

The next day (January 8) Harcourt writes again, in high spirits, to Granville. "The news to-day is good—the best yet." There has been another meeting of the Cabinet and Schuvaloff has written to him that "the dispositions of the Cabinet are good and even I who am not an optimist in general am much reassured to-day." Harcourt continues:

[1] *The Life of B. Disraeli*, by G. E. Buckle, vol. vi, p. 270.

. . . For the present the Peace Party in the Cabinet are clearly in the ascendant, and Dizzy has probably learnt that the disposition of the country would not support him in breaking the windows and so has drawn in his horns. But *sic notus Ulixes*. When baffled in one direction he will " try it on " in another, and he generally gets his own way. However we are over the first fence now, viz. the principle of separate negotiations between Turkey and Russia. Of course the next big obstacle will be the *terms*, which must soon transpire. But *alors comme alors*. . . .

In this cheerful frame of mind Harcourt went next day (January 9) to speak to the Liberals at Oxford. " I have shown James what I am going to say," he tells Hartington, " and have cut out some *Russianism*. I fear there may be still too much left to please you, but I think it is necessary to protest against this most impolitic abuse of those with whom we must negotiate and with whom it is our interest to be friends." In reference to the abuse, Granville remarks to Harcourt (January 8), " I suppose it is true that the clamour for war is really based upon enormous Turkish speculations." And, alluding to Harcourt's suspicion of January 6 that Russia was stiffening, he asks, " Why should they be so polite to us when we snub all their overtures and insist upon treating them as outlaws ? "

In his speech at Oxford, one of the weightiest of his career, Harcourt recanted his support of the Crimean War and asked whether in the face of that blunder England was to be again dragged into a war on behalf of Turkey ? He countered the argument of Russia's aggressiveness by pointing out that in recent years France had taken Algiers and annexed Savoy, and yet we had not made war on France. Prussia had conquered Hanover and annexed Alsace and Lorraine, and yet we had not made war on Prussia. And in an eloquent passage he described the aggrandizement and greatness of the British Empire, and warned the nation not to embrace a doctrine that might recoil on themselves. He repudiated the ignorant prejudice that was aroused by " British interests," and said the idea that because we had conquered India we had the right to condemn the rest of Asia to remain outside contact with civilization was as

ridiculous as the claim of Spain 300 years before to prohibit every nation on earth from navigating beyond a certain parallel of longitude in the direction of the Indies. He discussed the just terms of settlement, and, referring to the blunder in refusing the Berlin Memorandum, said :

> Sir, if there is danger of war at this moment, it is because the Government, conscious of the disastrous consequences which their own error has brought about, may be meditating to fight their way back into that position in the European Concert which, by their own mismanagement, they have lost.

For a long time the Government had been proclaiming that they cared only for British interests. " A nation that paddles its own canoe cannot expect to be chosen to pull stroke in the eight-oar of Europe. We ought to desist from inducing Turkey to think that she could rely on the help of England ; " and he asserted that all the blood that had been shed since the fall of Plevna could be laid at the door of those false expectations. The voice of the provinces was all for peace. " From every quarter," he said, " voices are pouring forth like the sound of many waters, and the burden of their prayer is the same, ' Scatter Thou the people that delight in war.' "

The speech was welcomed in *The Times* as the testimony " not of a Liberal leader, but of an Englishman " against " a disgraceful and useless war," and Hartington wrote :

> HARLESTON, *January* 10, 1878.— . . . I think your speech was capital and not at all too Russian, even for me. I have not the least objection to fairness to Russia, or to rebuking the absurd abuse of Russia ; but it seems to me that if too much sympathy with Russia and dislike of the Turks is shown, it weakens the effect of the argument against the war party. . . .

That party was still powerful. Parliament met on January 17 in the midst of an angry and ignorant panic. The Russian army had reached the Sea of Marmora and Constantinople lay at its mercy. The war was over, and a treaty between victor and vanquished which might involve the future of the Turkish capital was under discussion. The Press rang with panic-stricken cries against a menace which

was popularly supposed to spell the ruin of the British Empire, and the pro-Turkish element in the Cabinet once more became ascendant. Nothing had been done by Russia in violation of our terms of neutrality; but the Government asked for a vote of six millions, and a few days later the British fleet was ordered to the Dardanelles, a proceeding that led to the resignation of Lord Carnarvon. By this time the reasonable conditions under which Russia was prepared to make a settlement were already in the hands of the Foreign Office, but they were not published and in their absence popular excitement increased. In the House of Commons there was a five days' debate on the Vote of Credit, and Harcourt stated the views he had already urged at Oxford. He demanded from the Government an assurance that they were going into a European Conference "to call a new world into existence to repair the scandals of the old," and not merely to save from the wreck some fragments of a ruined system. He insisted that nationality was a stronger force than diplomatic instruments, and in a powerful passage showed how the Treaty of Vienna of 1815 had been torn to shreds because it denied that principle:

> There were giants in the land in those days, but they made a gigantic blunder and their work had failed. The Treaty of Vienna was signed twelve years before he was born, and in his lifetime he had seen every bit of it torn into fragments. The chain first broke where it was weakest, for a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. It broke in Greece. The emancipation of Greece under the influence of England was the first breach in the Treaty of Vienna. Then followed the emancipation of Belgium, then the emancipation of Italy; then came the Holstein question; then the old German Empire was broken down at the battle of Sadowa; it was finally destroyed at the battle of Sedan. The Treaty of Vienna had gone to pieces. Why? Because it was founded upon principles radically false—upon dynastic arrangements, upon a geographical puzzle: it was made to suit the ambition of rulers, and it neglected altogether the interests and the sympathies of nationalities and populations. (Hear, hear!) He did not wonder that the negotiators at Vienna made that mistake, fatal as it was. When, after the deluge of the French Revolution, the spires of ancient institutions began to appear out of the flood, it was not unnatural that a different view should be taken from what was taken now; but the edifice was built of un-

tempered mortar; it had broken down, and it now lay in ruins. What was it that had broken down that edifice; what was it that had worked like leaven in the lump; what was it that had destroyed the Treaty of 1815? It was the principle of nationalities. What had made Prince Bismarck so strong in Europe? Not his armies, great as they were; but because he had the courage and the wisdom to grasp the principle of nationalities, by which he had ground potentates to powder. What had made Austria so weak? It was because by the very conditions of her existence she was the enemy of the principle of nationality and autonomy. What had made Russia so weak? Her treatment of Poland. What had made her so strong? Because she was the vindicator of oppressed races. ("Oh!") Was she not strong? Was she not the vindicator of oppressed races? After all, the Slavs were a great nationality, and they had rights and aspirations which ought to be respected. If we acted upon the old policy, doubtless we should have good reason to fear Russia. It would not be her armies, or her fortresses, or her extent of territory which would make her formidable; it would be the gratitude of the people that she had emancipated which would be her strength. (Hear, hear!) It was not yet too late for Her Majesty's Government to equal, and even more than rival, Russia, if they went into the Conference with a changed policy. England might surpass Russia in that Conference in being the champion, not of one, but of many races.

Throughout February and March the issue hung in the balance. The war party were still powerful and Derby followed Carnarvon into retirement as a protest against the calling out of the reserves. Meanwhile Austria had issued an invitation to a European Conference at Vienna, afterwards changed to Berlin, and the Government had published the Russian terms of peace of the previous June. Harcourt wrote to Granville:

Harcourt to Granville.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *February* 18, 1878.— . . . At last the Government have given us (Turkey No. 15) the papers relating to the Russian terms of peace of June last. These are the terms which in the letters I wrote to you six weeks ago formed the basis of my conversation with S. (Schuvaloff). They are of great importance. They seem to me to show:

(1) That the Russian Government did not act to us in a spirit of dissimulation or reserve but on the contrary with great frankness.

(2) That the Government and Layard between them did all they could to prevent the Turks from accepting a moderate settlement.

It may be that the Turks at that time, buoyed up by their hopes of

resistance, would not have accepted the terms. But it was clearly our business to have done what we could to bring them to a different frame of mind.

On the contrary Layard (bottom of p. 10) openly said "it has been his object to raise such hopes"—the hopes, viz., that if she did not succeed in the war the influence of England would be used in her favour at the peace.

What was this but a distinct encouragement to the Turk to fight on? If he won he would lose nothing; if he was beaten the influence of England would prevent his losing much.

Ought not our language to have been exactly the opposite?—"These are the terms you can have now. They are moderate. If you don't take them it will be the worse for you. And if you refuse them we can do nothing hereafter to help you."

It seems to me very important that we should inquire whether (as I believe to be the fact) the Government of Austria and Germany assented in June to these terms. If so the sole responsibility of withholding or dissuading their adoption by the Turks rests upon our Government.

"I saw Schuvaloff last night," he writes to Granville (March 5). "He told me the terms of peace as he had them yesterday from Ignatieff and as he communicated them to Derby. They are simple and moderate, and correspond almost to the terms of June, except that Bulgaria is somewhat larger." He then defines the terms which proved to be the basis of the Treaty of San Stefano, and proceeds:

. . . It is impossible to cook up a war out of this. Of course there will be a good deal of wrangling over the quantity and quality of Bulgarian autonomy. But I do not see how the English Government can use any real influence to cut them down. . . .

I told him (Schuvaloff) the more moderate his terms were the more persuaded the Turkophils would be that there was a secret treaty. He asked me rather anxiously whether I really believed that the English Government would seriously take up the Greeks versus the Slavs. I said I did not know, but I hoped they would. He said, "That would be to complete the destruction of Turkey"; to which I replied, "*Tant mieux*, we do not want to leave you a serviceable slave." . . .

The confusion and disquiet that prevailed were aggravated at the end of April by the decision of the Government without the authority of Parliament to send Indian troops to Malta. This proceeding Harcourt challenged on the ground that statute law prescribed that all native troops employed out of

India should be paid for by the Crown, and that therefore a vote of the House of Commons would be required. Harcourt contended (May 6) that the action of the Government amounted to a claim on the part of the Crown to the right to move the whole of the Indian army to any place—even to England—for any purpose whatever without the sanction of Parliament. "We have a great rod in pickle for Northcote on Monday," he writes to Hartington (May 11). "In 1867 he distinctly admitted that the sending of native troops to Abyssinia and charging the cost on the Indian Revenue in the first instance with the intention of repaying it was an illegal act and a violation of Gladstone's clause of the Act of 1858 for which he humbly begged pardon." His indignation at what seemed a breach of the principle of the Bill of Rights, which forbade the employment of any troops, native or foreign, without the consent of Parliament overflowed in a torrent of precedents which he discharged in Parliament and in letters to Hartington. Meanwhile the Jingo frenzy was still high, and Harcourt, writing to Hartington, expresses alarm at the news he has had from Schuvaloff that the Cabinet may decide not to go to the Berlin Conference. "It seems to be another Berlin Memorandum affair over again. . . . I find it very difficult to understand exactly the point on which they have split. As far as I can understand it is an affair of *amour propre* on both sides. Russia says, 'We will not be dictated to.' England says, 'You shall take our terms.'" But the fear was unfounded. The two years' struggle on the issue of peace and war was over, and one day, when the streets were still ringing with the Jingo refrain, the public were startled by the disclosure in the *Globe* of the fact that England and Russia had entered into a secret treaty which practically ratified the treaty between Russia and Turkey arranged at San Stefano in March. It was a strange *dénouement*, and struck the war mood dead. The Berlin Congress followed. It confirmed the provisions of the Treaty of San Stefano in many respects, but diminished, with unhappy results in the future, the territory of the new Bulgaria, leaving Macedonia and Thrace still in the hands

of the Turk. But the broad achievement was great. The independence of Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Rumania was established, and the blight of Turkish misrule in Europe was reduced almost to vanishing-point. But although the policy of "bag and baggage" had largely won and the pro-Turkish sympathies of the Government had been frustrated, there were imperfections. It was discovered that not only was there a secret treaty with Russia on the one side, but that the Government had entered into a secret treaty with Turkey on the other, by which we had become the sole guarantors of the territories of Turkey in Asia, and that with this heavy obligation we had annexed Cyprus.

IV

While the results achieved by the war were important, Harcourt had no faith in the Berlin Convention. In a prophetic phrase he declared "it was a truce and not a settlement." The prophecy was amply fulfilled. In a letter to Hartington (July 28) commenting on "Beakey's (Beaconsfield's) Riding School speech," he takes up Beaconsfield's contention that the Convention would "prevent future Governments from ever doing what this Government has done, viz., to keep the peace whilst Russia attacked Turkey." He proceeds:

Harcourt to Hartington.

. . . He (Beaconsfield) boldly says not only that the Crimean War would not have taken place if there had been such a Treaty but that the recent Russo-Turkish War would not have occurred. But how so? The Treaty of 1856 did bind us then just as much as the Convention will bind future Governments. And yet we had Ministers hesitating, doubting, considering contingencies, and at last (as Salisbury says in his last despatch) determining that the risk and cost of war was too great. Why is this not to happen again? If the Treaty of 1856 did not hinder this, why should the Convention of 1878? . . .

The truth is that no Treaty of Guarantee has ever compelled a nation to go to war against its will or against the judgment of the people as to its expediency and necessity—nor ever will. History is full of such examples. We had an offensive and defensive alliance with Holland, and invoked it in 1780, but Holland declined, etc., etc.

To go to war is to risk the existence of a State, and self-preservation is the highest law which will always prevail, and each generation must and always will be the judge of circumstances which will justify or compel it to hazard its all.

It may or may not be a wise thing to go to war to prevent the advance of Russia. If it is a wise thing we *should* do it *without* a Treaty: if it is not we *should not do* it *with* a Treaty.

To say that Cyprus will aid us in such an event is an absurdity. If we go to war for Turkey to protect her Asiatic frontier, we shall not embark an army from Cyprus to march through Asia Minor. We should become the ally of Turkey. We should send our forces to Constantinople as headquarters, and we should operate from thence with our fleet and our transports on the southern shore of the Black Sea. . . .

All their Treaties of Guarantee are simply the expression of a desire that Turkey should continue to exist. It is a desire for that which is an impossibility. They may delay, but they cannot avert the inevitable decay. They have not and they will not prevail against the moral forces which sooner or later overthrow bad Governments.

The Treaty of 1856 guaranteed to Turkey Bosnia, Herzegovina, Serbia, the territory now annexed to Montenegro, Bulgaria, Batoum, Kars, Ardahan. What has become of them? You make fresh guarantees of what remains, which will experience the same fate from the same causes.

In attempting to defend that which cannot be defended we only prepare for ourselves the humiliation of deserting that which we have undertaken in vain to sustain. . . .

In the House of Commons (July 30) the Berlin Convention was attacked on a motion by Hartington which laid special emphasis on the mischief of the Anglo-Turkish Treaty and its far-reaching engagements for the defence of Turkish territories in Asia. The debate was dominated by Gladstone's famous speech on "the insane Convention." Harcourt took part in it, and addressed himself mainly to an attack on the Asiatic policy involved in the Anglo-Turkish Convention. It was not a real policy, because the East had never been controlled except by conquest. The civilization of Asia Minor was a great policy worthy of a great nation. No one could suppose that Turkey, which had refused to carry out reforms in her European provinces when the Russian army was at her gates and the whole of Europe remonstrating with her, would carry them out in Asia Minor on the mere strength of this Convention. It could not be

pretended that Asia Minor was a British interest. All the spokesmen of the Conservative party had maintained that those interests were concerned with the sea route and not with the land route. He concluded :

> . . . The fate which came to the Treaty of 1856 will come to the Convention of 1878. It must be so. No guarantees can bind posterity to go to war. What, then, does this Convention come to ? My belief about it is that after your failure to induce Russia to give up many of the things she had claimed and obtained, you found it necessary to bring back something, and that something was Cyprus. It would never have done to have bought Cyprus without Cyprus being wrapped up, and you wrapped Cyprus up in this Convention. We are told not to be afraid of this Convention. It is said, "After all, it is not half so onerous a thing as you suppose it to be. It is a conditional agreement—an agreement never to come into operation. It is dependent on two conditions : one is that Russia gives up the fortresses, and the other is that Turkey is well governed. Russia will not give up the fortresses, Turkey will not be well governed." From this point it seems to me that if this Convention were a serious thing the burden would be intolerable. I am not so much afraid of that. I do not complain so much of the burdens as that this Convention is utterly delusive. It puts forward conditions which are not intended to be fulfilled ; and, therefore, I regard it as a transaction unworthy of English statesmanship and beneath the dignity of English statesmen. (Cheers.)

V

During the long suspense that had hung over Europe, normal Parliamentary affairs had been largely in abeyance, but new troubles were coming to birth and old troubles were assuming new aspects. Writing (July 1877) to his son, now at the end of his first term at Eton, Harcourt, after congratulating him on his place, and expressing the pleasure which the boy's success gave to "your dear old Papa," says :

> I only write these few lines as I have been up all night in the H. of C. and have been denouncing Biggar & Co. for more than twenty hours in succession. We sat from 4 p.m. on Tuesday afternoon to 2 on Wednesday afternoon, then they gave in beat. It is one of the most extraordinary events that ever occurred in the H. of C. I went to bed for two hours. I returned at 10.30 and found the

House still sitting. I am very tired now and will write no more except to say, my darling, that you have made me very happy.

The "extraordinary event" that had happened marked the beginning of a new phase of the ancient struggle with Ireland. Since the Nationalists had broken away from their association with the Liberal party, and especially with the advent of Parnell, a more aggressive policy had been adopted by the Irish members, and it culminated in the introduction of the weapon of obstruction, with the quaint, almost grotesque figure of Biggar in the leading rôle. The scene referred to in the letter to Loulou occurred on the night of July 2. Harcourt's parliamentary conscience was outraged by the indignity to the decorum of the House. Writing the next day to Hartington he says:

Harcourt to Hartington.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *July* 3, 1877.— . . . I was there till 3 o'clock. The opposition of the Home Rulers was most unreasonable, and I voted with the Government in every division till I went away.

At 1.30 I pointed out to S. Northcote that it was idle to resist if the Irishmen were obstinate, and that it could only end as it did. I appealed also to the Irish, but of course in vain. Northcote with singular want of judgment resolved to keep up a hopeless and undignified fight. I went on till 3 o'clock voting with him. The Tories of course became very noisy and the scene was discreditable. At 3 o'clock I again suggested to Northcote to give way, as whatever might be the merits of the case the Irish must win, that the House was placed in a false position, and it was impossible to vote money at that hour.

However, he still persisted and appealed to the Tories to support him, which of course they did vociferously. I then retired. . . .

Altogether it was as discreditable a piece of bad management on the part of Northcote as I ever witnessed. He got the Government and the House into a scrape from which there was no escape, and taught the Irishmen their power in a way they will not soon forget. . . .

As the new warfare developed Harcourt's indignation increased. He wrote to *The Times*, and in the counsels of the Opposition declared for severe measures, as the following note in W. E. Forster's diary (July 31), following

another obstructive night on the South African Bill, indicates :

I went home, went to bed about 10 a.m. to be called at 12.45, but Kensington sent for me at 12. On coming down I found the seven staggered by fatigue and a threat by Northcote of suspension, but Harcourt very hot for censure or suspension after victory which would have been very foolish. At length they succumbed, and about 2 the Bill got through committee.

In another matter at this time Harcourt was called in to assist the Government. Public attention had been drawn to the unsatisfactory condition of the law relating to courts martial, and towards the end of the Session a Select Committee of the House of Commons was set up to inquire into the subject. Harcourt, whose past experience of courts martial gave him peculiar authority, was asked to serve, and he drafted a report which was published in the next year. In this he aimed at consolidating the whole existing law in a single statute and at making distinction between the punishment inflicted for military " crimes " committed in time of war and in time of peace. There are obviously faults which are a matter of life and death in war which cannot be so regarded in peace. The report sought to define conduct " to the prejudice of good order and military discipline," an expression which had been made in some cases a reason for inflicting severe punishment on men for making complaints of their superiors, and was susceptible of being turned to the uses of military tyranny. His efforts to humanize the law of courts martial were naturally not achieved without difficulty, and Stanley, the Secretary for War, writing to him (June 4, 1878) says :

Lord Stanley to Harcourt.

H.R.H. (the Duke of Cambridge) was grateful to you for handling him as Isaak Walton recommends the angler to handle the worm —" as tho' you loved him." But what care it must require to drive such a team as you have got !

Harcourt gave assistance to the Government in another direction. A storm had arisen in India over the Fuller case, involving the position of judges in that country.

Salisbury and the Viceroy, Lord Lytton, had interfered with a decision of the judges and come into conflict with Anglo-Indian sentiment, and there was a move on the part of the Opposition to attack the administration. Harcourt stamped on the proposal energetically. At this time (June 1877) Salisbury was fighting the battle for peace within the Cabinet, and Harcourt, who knew that the war party wished to "run him down," insisted that in this matter it was the duty of Liberals "to do all we can to support him against Dizzy." In a letter to Hartington in which he put forward this view, he discussed with much sagacity the position of judges in India:

Harcourt to Hartington.

14, STRATFORD PLACE, *June* 4.— . . . In England the judges are properly removed from all control by the Executive, but they are controlled here effectually by two forces which are wanting in India: (1) Juries; (2) Public opinion. Lowe's theory would make Indian judges absolute despots, in my judgment the very worst form of tyranny which could exist.

If the judges in this case had had to submit the matter to a native jury the case would have been very different. If there had been any public opinion to control them it would not have been necessary for the Executive to interfere. But there is no public opinion in India except that which the Civil Service creates in its own favour. And of this exclusive caste the judges are themselves a part.

The only representatives of a public opinion to which the natives can look for protection are to be found in the instincts of justice which are brought by the "short service" great officials, such as those who mainly constitute the Council of the Governor-General, who have not left a free country long enough to have parted with those traditions which wear out in a body of men habituated to the exercise of an unlimited authority over subject races. I therefore demur to the fundamental proposition that the judges in India are, can or ought to be regarded on the same footing in relation to the Executive as those in England or any of the free Colonies. The House of Commons has a manner of looking at the pith of the question and setting aside mere technical and hair-splitting distinctions which delight us lawyers.

They will ask, Was Salisbury right or were the judges right in the Fuller case? and they will answer in favour of Salisbury.

It is impossible to pretend that this question can be argued as an abstract matter of principle. If Salisbury is condemned it would be understood in India as a rebuke to his interposition in favour

of the natives. It would be regarded, as the question is now regarded, as a struggle between the dominant race and their subjects in which the House of Commons had given the victory to the first. . . .

In a letter from Simla (July 30) Lytton conveyed to Harcourt his gratitude for "the undeserved kindness of your spontaneous support on the Fuller case." He had incidentally saved his party from stumbling into a false position on a vital issue of Indian government.

VI

After his second marriage, Harcourt removed from Stratford Place to 7, Grafton Street, which became henceforth one of the chief political centres of the time. In spite of his hard-hitting in debate, his range of personal friendships was unusually comprehensive, and at his table every shade of political opinion was represented. In a letter to his son, for example, he says:

April 8, 1878.—We had a dinner of sixteen on Saturday, Lord Carlingford and Lady Waldegrave, Lord and Lady Ripon, Lord and Lady Randolph Churchill, Lord and Lady G. Hamilton, Mr. and Mrs. Sturgis, Mr. Hy. Calcraft, Mr. Chamberlain (the Radical) and R. Brett. It was very pleasant and successful, and the house looked very well and was much admired.

In the midst of his public activities Loulou was never far from his thoughts. To his wife he writes from Cambridge:

November, 1877.— . . . I have sent L. one translation of the Odyssey. But I wish you would see if you can *to-morrow morning* get him either at Bumpus or Bickers & Bush, Leicester Square, *Cowper's Translation of the Odyssey*. I think there has been a modern edition. *Make* them find it and send it down *at once* to L., as he is evidently cramming for some Exam. . . .

"I must try and give you a little help in the holidays, so that you will be ready for your trials at the end of the next term," he writes to the boy. . . . "No father ever had a child he had more cause to love, and who has given him so much happiness and never a moment's pain." . . "I have written to Ainger to say this

(January 31, 1878) is the first birthday I have been absent from you, and to ask leave for Saturday." . . . "I have got your barge tickets for the boat-race"—this was the tenor of the correspondence he kept up with affectionate industry while his son was at school, and during his holidays the boy was never far from his side. A new claimant to his abundant family affections presented himself on May 7, 1878, when Lady Harcourt gave birth to a son, Robert. Meanwhile the political cloud that had come between Harcourt and his brother at Nuneham had dispersed. Time had tempered the shame of a Radical Harcourt representing Oxford, though the wound still rankled a little. Thus, when Harcourt sends to his brother a cup of the Harcourt family, dated 1630, which has been presented to him, Edward replies:

> I am very glad W. Evelyn has given you a family cup. I shall by no means take it. It will serve to remind you of the steady loyalty and unvarying politics of our family in Oxfordshire for so many hundred years. . . . I quite appreciate your kindness and delicacy about the cup, but why should I monopolize everything?

At this time Edward was engaged in his task of preparing the *Harcourt Papers* for the press for private circulation, and, replying to the offer of his brother to deal with the life and letters of Lord Chancellor Harcourt, he says:

> Of course I should be very glad if you would undertake the Chancellor and I could quite trust you not to put any (what shall we call it?) over the lustre of his Toryism!

Early in 1878 Edward was returned to Parliament for Oxfordshire in the Conservative interest, and his brother wrote offering to undertake the formality of introduction, a service which Edward gratefully accepted. His advent did not disturb the current of Parliament. He sat silent and introspective while his brother thumped the box, and the journalistic jesters of the time declared that his steady stare of wonder, contempt, and sorrow at his voluble and erring relative was causing Harcourt to desert the House.

A pleasant testimony to the place which Harcourt had now assumed in the Liberal party was his unanimous

election in the summer of 1877 to membership of the Reform Club under a special rule empowering the Committee "to elect each year two gentlemen of distinguished eminence for Public Service or in Science, Literature or Arts." The tribute flattered him, although, unlike Bright, James, and others of his political friends, he never became an *habitué* of the club, but limited his club life to the Oxford and Cambridge, of which he had become a member on first coming to London. He had now been in Parliament ten years, and although the only office he had held was the Solicitor-Generalship, which he had occupied for a few months, no political career seemed more opulent in prospects. Next to Gladstone, he was easily the most formidable debater in the House. His ebullient wit, his power of concentration, his wide range of knowledge, and his energy of mind and manner gave him a unique place in Parliamentary conflict. He had his defects, the chief of which was that arrogance which his father had reproved when he was a boy and of which long ago, in a letter to Mrs. Ponsonby, he had himself made frank acknowledgment. It was a defect of the temper which did injustice to his natural generosity of heart, but it made him, as Campbell-Bannerman afterwards said, a thorn in the flesh to his friends as well as a terror to his enemies and often put unnecessary difficulties in his path. He had by this time definitely committed himself to a political rather than a legal career, and in the judgment of his contemporaries had the ultimate leadership of the Liberal party within his grasp. He was in no haste, and although he had chafed under the august leadership of Gladstone, he was quite happy as lieutenant to Hartington, whom he liked, not merely because he was not august, but because of his high qualities of judgment and plain sense. Moreover, he was a contemporary with whom he could deal on equal terms and on whom he could press his point of view with something like equal authority. The relations of the two men were of the most cordial kind, and Hartington, who had little taste for "devilling" and no false pride, welcomed

the fruits of Harcourt's enormous appetite for historical and legal research on any theme that arose. Harcourt supplied him at this time not only with precedents, but with a private secretary who afterwards played a considerable part in public affairs. "You once mentioned a young Brett to me as a likely Private Secretary," wrote Hartington to Harcourt (December 19, 1877). "Do you know whether he still wishes for anything of that kind?" As the outcome of the inquiry Reginald Brett, the present Lord Esher, began that career which made him for a generation a sort of *liaison* officer between the powers and potentates of all camps, and the unofficial smoother of affairs.

In June 1878, by the death of the Duchess of Argyll, the circle of Harcourt's close personal friendships was further impoverished. He journeyed to Roseneath with Gladstone and others to attend the funeral. "The poor Duke is wonderfully composed but looks ill," he writes to Lady Harcourt. "Gladstone and I walked up to the house with him. Gladstone looked very ill and did not sleep all night."

With the Session of 1878 over and the peril of a European war at least postponed, Harcourt went to Scotland on a shooting and yachting holiday, taking Loulou with him. They first went to Glen Quoich, Invergarry. "I was out all day to-day fishing and shooting with L.," he writes to Lady Harcourt. "He killed his first grouse to-day, which is an event. I went out stalking yesterday much against my will in mist and storm all day and missed my stag." He intended to go via Dunvegan to Sir John Fowler's on Loch Broom, "picking up the gay Macleods" on the way. "She is a daughter of Northcote, and I shall probably find Northcote there . . ." But the programme was interrupted. Loulou was seized with the agonies of toothache, and he writes from Inverness to Lady Harcourt in admiration of the courage of the boy under "the horrid business" at the dentist's. "He showed so much sense and fortitude. I know how perfect he is in all the softer qualities, but it

gives me great hope and pleasure to see that he is not wanting in those stronger forces which he will want in the battle of life. My love for him grows deeper every day as each fresh trial shows how good and true he is." After this episode father and son set out on a tour among the Western Islands, in a yacht of 120 tons, steaming 9 knots. After sailing up the Sound of Sleat to Loch Duich, "which is as lovely as Lugano," they encountered a gale and took shelter in Kyleakin, "where we spent many happy days in old times. He (Loulou) was greatly excited at the thought of seeing our old yacht, but it turned out like a toothless old woman, very unexciting, being, as I expected, a rotten wreck—so we disposed of its component parts to the inhabitants, our old friends." Proceeding northwards to Portree, halting to fish and shoot on the way, they encountered the heaviest storm that had been experienced on the coast for twenty years. Writing to Lady Harcourt, he says:

September 18.— . . . The sailor Algy [Sheridan][1] will appreciate what it was when I say that the barometer fell 1¼ inch in 12 hours. We were happily in a very fair harbour at Portree, but the squalls off the hills were so tremendous that with two anchors out we were in momentary fear of our cables parting, and we had steam up all the time, having fixed on the spot where we should run ashore in case the anchors failed us. This state of things lasted nearly forty-eight hours, during all which time we were tossing about within 300 yards of the shore, but unable to land. It was very unpleasant and a little dangerous, but Loulou bore it like a man and slept all through the night. . . .

With this adventure the holiday ended. Loulou had to return, leaving his father behind. "I parted with him last night with a heavy heart," he writes to Lady Harcourt. "I find now he has gone that my only real pleasure in Scotland is to witness his enjoyment. . . ."

Returning from his holiday, Harcourt took up his customary duties as Whewell Professor at Cambridge. "I have just come back from a long walk with Sir H. Maine who, as you know, is of the India Office and *âme damnée*

[1] Lady Harcourt's brother-in-law.

of Salisbury," he writes to his wife (November 4). "He was my coach when I was an undergraduate thirty-one years ago, and it was strange for us to meet under such altered circumstances, he Master of Trinity Hall and I a Professor." The next day he writes: "I gave my first lecture to-day and had a satisfactory class. There is a big feast in Hall to-day to entertain the Judge who is here on Circuit, but I hate *banquets* and shall dine in my own room. I generally collect a dozen men in my rooms after Hall and we have a good smoke and talk. . . . I also send you letters from Adam and Loulou. The latter had the impudence to direct to me 'Professor Harcourt.' . . ."

But the quiet interlude at Cambridge was darkened by new storms which heralded the final break-up of the Disraelian *régime*.

2 new wars

CHAPTER XVI

DEFEAT OF DISRAELI

Failure of Salisbury's foreign policy—The Lytton policy in Afghanistan—Harcourt's and Hartington's speeches in the country—Gathering clouds in South Africa—Death of Lady Waldegrave—Election prospects—Defection of Lord Derby—Harcourt's oratory—Radical demand for Ireland—The Liverpool election—The Gladstone Cabinet—Defeat at Oxford.

THE pleasant illusion of "Peace with Honour" was short-lived, and the Berlin Treaty began to show signs of disruption while the ink on it was still hardly dry. It had served to shore up the Government for a time, and to give them a new lease of life. But events were preparing the final downfall of Disraelian Imperialism. Hardly had the threat of a European convulsion passed, than the country found itself with two new wars on hand, one, the result of an unwarranted attack on the Zulus, the other due to a reversal of Indian policy issuing in hostilities against the Ameer of Afghanistan. The graver of these two incidents was, in Harcourt's opinion, related to the mischievous despatch of Indian troops to Malta during the Russo-Turkish trouble, against which he had protested at the time. In a vigorous and incisive attack on the foreign policy of the Government which he delivered at Scarborough on October 30, 1878, he pointed out that the Malta incident had been intended to impress Russia with a sense of our Indian resources. If, as was probable, there had followed Russian intrigue in Afghanistan that intrigue was intended to create a situation on the borders of India that would

keep the Sepoys in that country. This view was supported by Lord Northbrook, who had been Viceroy.

The speech at Scarborough was followed by a long exposure in *The Times* by Harcourt of the reasons why the Berlin Treaty was already disintegrating. Again, it was the desire to protect Turkey that was the root of the mischief. We had rejected the proposals made by the other Powers for the federal execution of the treaty. We had refused lest Europe should be invited to compel Turkey to fulfil her obligations under the treaty. But in leaving the door ajar for the Porte we had, by an utter lack of foresight, left it open for Russia also. We did not need joint action to compel Turkey to perform her undertakings, for the armed force of Russia present on the spot was adequate for the task; but we did need the collective action of Europe in the case of Russia herself. This we might have had and this Lord Salisbury had refused, and now we saw him going hat in hand to the various Ministers of Europe to ask a renewal of the proposal we had rejected at Berlin.

We can figure to ourselves Prince Bismarck with a brutal frankness replying "Tu l'as voulu, Georges Dandin," or, as he is a good English scholar, he might answer in the old lines:

"He who will not when he may,
When he will he shall have nay!"

Writing to Hartington, Harcourt says:

November 7, 1878.— . . . My wife saw M. Corry in town yesterday, and says he told her he was at Hatfield when Dizzy and Salisbury read my letter to *The Times*, that I was all wrong in the assertion that the Government had been seeking the aid of the Powers to enforce the Treaty of Berlin against Russia, and that he supposed that I had got the idea at *Knowsley*, which was a source not to be trusted. They may deny it as they please, but the telegrams which come from Vienna, Berlin, and Rome show that they have made such an attempt and failed, though luckily they were cautious in the form of their application.

Whether the information had come from Knowsley—i.e., from Lord Derby—there is nothing to show, but the suspicion was not without a certain basis. Derby, for whom Harcourt had had a warm affection dating from the

Apostolic days at Cambridge, had shown very liberal tendencies, and his wife, who was understood to wish him to join the Liberal party, a little later drove openly with Harcourt from Knowsley when he went to address a Liberal meeting in Liverpool, and significantly left her carriage standing outside the Liberal Club. So far as the particular suggestion was concerned, Beaconsfield was able to meet the allegations of Harcourt that we had been seeking the aid of the European Powers to enforce the Treaty of Berlin against Russia with a reassuring message from the Tsar.

In the meantime, the Afghan trouble was assuming grave proportions, and a meeting of Parliament was summoned for December. Harcourt was hot against the enterprise. "For my part," he wrote to Hartington from Cambridge (November 22), "unless the Government can give some clear evidence of a Russian alliance with the Ameer hostile to us (not mere surmise), I consider the war wholly unjustifiable and should be prepared to condemn it *in toto*." He was in close communication with Northbrook, who agreed with him and Sir Henry Maine that Sir Bartle Frere, who had "a deadly hatred and jealousy of Lawrence," was "at the bottom of the mischief." But Salisbury and Lytton were involved, and it was at the latter's instigation that Fitzjames Stephen wrote to *The Times* defending the Government policy. This led to a heated controversy in that journal between the old rivals of the Cambridge Union. Stephen had said explicitly, "I deny that the maxims of European international law should be the measure of justice in regard to Shere Ali," and had so placed himself at the mercy of so practised a controversialist as Harcourt, who said that Great Britain had bound herself by treaty not to violate Afghan territory or to interfere in the Ameer's dominions. Did Stephen's Asiatic doctrine place a convention of this kind on a different footing from other treaties? Were we at liberty to break that treaty for the attainment of the scientific frontier, which the Prime Minister had declared to be the real object of war with Afghanistan?

He was compelled to join issue also with another old friend, Lord Lytton, who had found a pretext for a mission to the Ameer, intended to discover the extent of the Russian intrigues. He had chosen the very unhappy course of sending Sir Lewis Pelly to announce the assumption by the Queen of the title of Empress of India. In his speech in the House on December 13 Harcourt related in their sequence the events that had followed on the almost inevitable rejection of that mission. The situation when the Russian envoys went to Kabul was, he admitted, a difficult one, but the Indian Government had made the circumstances of their mission as humiliating as possible for the Ameer. The whole conduct of the business aimed at securing a definite break. "This Imperial policy is a servile copy of the imperialism of the second Empire. They began, too, with a little war, a Mexican expedition, which was to exalt the Latin race and to gratify the pride of the French people."

Earlier in the controversy (November 7) Harcourt had urged Hartington not to speak in the country. "It is all very well for brigadiers to charge the enemy and keep the troops in spirits, but the Commander-in-Chief ought not to appear on the field till the real plan of campaign is developed." Now, however (December 19), he advised Hartington to speak at Leeds, but the occasion was one affecting the domestic affairs of the party. Joseph Chamberlain had now assumed a strong position as the leader of the left wing of Liberalism, and was engaged in a scheme of party reorganization in regard to which Hartington was, according to his nature, somewhat chilly. Harcourt urged him to go to the Leeds meeting of the Liberal Association, and "play the game of conciliation handsomely and cordially." He advised him when he met Chamberlain "not to thrust the conditions down his throat," but to put "more of the Arabian Nights into it." He added, "they will care little for the *head* of your speech if, like the rocket, the force is in the *tail*."

Hartington's correspondence with Chamberlain, however, ended in his deciding not to go to Leeds, and in a letter to Harcourt (January 2, 1879) he expressed his objections to a caucus designed to influence the policy of a party.

A tobogganing accident to Loulou while he and his father were staying at Rangemore, Burton-on-Trent, had disturbed Harcourt's Christmas. "You know how it always fusses me when anything is the matter with him," he wrote to his wife. But the broken nose was mended, and a week or two later the boy was at Studley Royal, and Lady Ripon was delighting the paternal heart with accounts of his shooting exploits and the comment of the keeper that "He's a ripper, and will be a clinking good shot." Christmas over, Harcourt made his customary appearance at the Druids' dinner at Oxford on New Year's Day, but reserved his set speech for the Liberal Association at Oxford on January 14, when he delivered a broadside against Disraelian Imperialism:

> We have seen a new spirit growing up among us which has deteriorated the staple fibre of the public mind—a spirit so strange to our ancient manners and traditions that it has been found necessary to invent for it a name for which the English language has no equivalent. It is called Jingoism. It has raged like some new epidemic, highly infectious for a time, though there are, happily, symptoms that the virulence of the poison is wearing itself off.

He went on to describe the typical English gentleman and the pushing, bragging "smart fellow," and said that "by a kind of elective affinity the vulgarian of private society becomes the Jingo of public life." He subjected this gospel to searching analysis in the light of recent events, described the insincerity of the Berlin Treaty, declared with an emphasis that events soon justified that Lord Beaconsfield's Eastern Rumelia "is just one of those ingenious pieces of political clockwork which have every merit except that they will not go," made havoc of the annexation of Cyprus, an island without a harbour for a fleet, which was to be "a strong place of arms for the defence of Turkey

in Asia Minor," and denounced the abandonment of the constitutional tradition that the Executive should act with Parliament as a coadjutor. In Salisbury's denial of the Schuvaloff agreement, which was in his possession, and his repudiation of a change in Indian policy when Lytton's breach with the Ameer had been arranged, Harcourt saw a sinister purpose of revolutionizing our constitutional system and founding government on the maxim *populus vult decipi et decipiatur*. Writing to Harcourt on this deliverance, Hartington said:

Hartington to Harcourt.

HOLKER HALL, *January* 16.—I congratulate you on the great success of your speech. It is the heaviest blow which has yet been delivered against the Government, and seems to me unanswerable. . . . I agree with you that we ought to set to work about preparations for the election; and we shall not have more than sufficient time, if the election should take place next autumn.

I have asked Brett to show you, if you are in town, the draft of my Edinburgh address (as Lord Rector of the University), and to ask you if you can help him to brush it up a little. I am much dissatisfied with it, but I have never tried my hand at literary composition before, and hope never to do so again. . . .

Whether Harcourt "brushed up" the Edinburgh address is not on record, but it is not likely that he would miss so agreeable a task. He not only made speeches himself but inspired speeches in others, and was always ready to supply ammunition to anybody who needed it, and to no one more readily than to Hartington. He wrote to him (February 4) with enthusiasm about the Edinburgh address —"the topics were well chosen, the style simple and dignified, and the doctrine of the good old Whig brand"— and, referring to Hartington's approaching speech at Liverpool, said, "I have no suggestions to offer except that you should *put plenty of powder into your gun*. I know it will always be held straight." But by the time he has reached the end of his letter his mind is bubbling with ideas for the Liverpool speech, and he jots down what he calls "a few rough notes" covering the whole field of foreign policy. Two days later he sends more notes apropos of a speech

by R. Bourke, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and, always a little nervous that Hartington would not put enough "powder into his gun," adds, "I know you will not allow the enemy to contrast (as they will be only too eager to do) your mildness with our fierceness." When the Liverpool campaign of Hartington was over his satisfaction was complete, and he wrote, "Nothing has had such a success in pulling the Party together, and they will meet on Thursday in high feather and spirits. The dismay of the Ministerialists is apparent in the shriek of *The Times* this morning."

While prompting Hartington for his speeches in the country, he was fertile in suggestions to Granville for the attack in the House of Lords. The Afghan war was dragging on, and papers issued by the Government showed that we had "obligatory engagements" towards Russia in Central Asia, but that Salisbury disputed the Russian interpretation of those engagements. What were they? He writes to Granville:

Harcourt to Granville.

7, GRAFTON STREET, *February* 19.—Surely if we have "obligatory engagements" towards Russia in respect of Afghanistan we ought to know exactly what they are, and this is the very point which S. (Salisbury) evades. As a fact I know that S. has given Russia an assurance that the English will not advance beyond Jellalabad and Kandahar as a *maximum*, and the withdrawal of the British force which is now going on is in furtherance of that undertaking. Ought we not to get this out? Anyhow it is very unsatisfactory that we should be told that there are "obligatory engagements" between England and Russia on the subject of Central Asia, and at the same time it should be asserted by Salisbury that he does not understand them in the same sense as they are taken by Russia. This state of things is certain to lead to future complications. Ought we not to ask what meaning the Government attribute to the Memorandum of 1875 and whether in their view it imposes any and what limits to our annexations in Afghanistan?

He urges Granville (March 26) to "*éclaircir* the position (in Eastern Rumelia) and make the Government declare what they are about," informing him that the Government, finding that the piece of clockwork invented by them would

not go, were now in favour of a joint occupation, "an open confession that the Treaty of Berlin will not work." But while Austria and Italy agreed, Germany and France now stood aside.

In the meantime Harcourt was delivering thwacking blows at the Government in the House of Commons. He made two speeches attacking the Cyprus policy, and in the second (March 24) gave a delightful disclosure of the genesis of that policy:

> It has been asked why we hold Cyprus at all; but as yet the Government have never vouchsafed any satisfactory answer. The fact is that the acquisition of Cyprus was determined upon at a much earlier period than that covered by the blue-books on the subject, and the record of it is to be found in a book which is not exactly official, but which nevertheless throws a considerable amount of light on the Eastern policy of the present Government. "The English," said this book, "want Cyprus, and they will take it as compensation. The English will not do the business of the Turks for nothing. They will take this city and occupy it. They want a new market for their cotton. England will never be satisfied until the people of Jerusalem wear calico turbans." The title of the book was *Tancred, or the New Crusade.*

II

Among "the half-dozen scrapes we were in," to use Harcourt's phrase at Sheffield (April 11), the gathering cloud in South Africa was not the least formidable. The annexation of the Transvaal carried out in 1877 had lighted a fire that was to smoulder for a generation before it burst into flames. The chief author of that mischievous policy, Sir Bartle Frere, the High Commissioner, had since, by his high-handed conduct, plunged the country into an idle and indefensible war against the Zulus. In a large measure the Government were hostile to Frere's activities, but they showed great weakness in dealing with him, and in the House of Commons (March 31) Harcourt made a devastating attack both on Frere and on the Ministers who had allowed themselves to be stampeded by his provocative and predatory methods. He followed the attack up in his speech at Sheffield, in which he gave

currency to a phrase, "prancing pro-Consuls," that hit off the character of the new Imperialism, and became a part of the political phraseology of Press and platform. He spoke of the war as one "the origin of which is already condemned, and the object of which no man can discover." On this occasion he not only surveyed the wide-spread failure of Disraelian foreign policy, but attacked the financial poltroonery of a Government which refused to pay for their adventures, and, having squandered the surplus left by their predecessors, piled up deficits which they had not the honesty or the courage to meet, offering the country "Peace with Honour upon tick" as their inglorious epitaph. He put his finger once more upon the cardinal vice of the Government policy. It had failed because it ran counter to the spirit of the age:

> In the last half-century (he said) Europe has been reconstructed on the principles of nationality; and that principle may be truly called the spirit of our age, to which no wise statesman will run counter. Greece, Italy, Belgium, Germany, owe their new birth to this omnipotent force. Do you suppose that this vital principle is less active in the East than in the West of Europe? Do you think that by your paper protocols you can smother out this potent, ever-living, struggling spirit?

This speech, like most of Harcourt's formal deliverances, had been elaborately prepared, while on a visit to Ilfracombe. Writing from thence to his wife, he says:

Harcourt to his Wife.

> ILFRACOMBE, *Saturday*.—I had an interview with the *famille* Northcote this morning who have been staying in this Hotel. They were as always amiable. She said, speaking of the prevalence of daughters in families, "only Ldy. Harcourt seems able to have a son." But I pointed out to her that the credit really belonged to the sire which on reflection she admitted to be true.
>
> I chaffed Sir S. about Naboth and Uriah, and told him I should correct it in Hansard, so he would have to accommodate his speech to mine.
>
> I get on slowly with the speech, and cannot form an opinion of its quality yet any more than you can of a half-born child.
>
> I have just received a telegram from Neilson of *The Times* proposing to be down here to take my speech on Monday, but I have

too elaborate

appointed him to meet me at Grafton Street on Tuesday morning, as I shall return to London Monday. . . .

To the end of his public life the gestation of a big speech was a formidable function with Harcourt.[1] In the quiet of his room he walked rapidly to and fro "like a caged lion," twirling a button of his coat until he succeeded in dislodging it, whereupon he started on another button, and woe to the intruder who broke in upon him in the midst of these agonies of composition. No doubt, from an argumentative and logical point of view, his speeches gained much from this elaborate preparation; but they lost the fresh and spontaneous wit and force that marked his impromptu manner. "I remember," said Sir George Trevelyan to me, "occasions on which, rising to reply in debate to previous speakers, he overwhelmed his antagonist and convulsed the House by the humour and impetus of his onset, and having swept the field fell back on his prepared speech and sacrificed much of the impression his impromptu exordium had created." Harcourt, of course, knew this, but his eye was not set on the audience so much as on the country, and he spoke not to be heard but to be read.

A note from Northcote to Harcourt (May 7) after the meeting at Ilfracombe indicates the pleasant relations that existed between Harcourt and the amiable leader of the Conservatives in the House of Commons:

11, Downing Street, *May* 7, 1879. Many thanks for your note on κότταβος. Lowe refers me to a passage in the Acharnians, where the Chorus attribute the Peloponnesian war to an affair at Megara arising out of a game, and ending in a raid upon Aspasia's handmaidens. . . .

Among the multitudinous problems over which Harcourt ranged with eager and voluminous energy, none engaged his mind quite so completely as a constitutional issue, which

[1] Dilke said to me, writes Lord Harcourt in his Journal, in 1885, "Your father always makes his speeches three times. The first time they are sublime, the second they are very good, and the third time they are only fairly good. He makes the first in conversation to one of his intimate friends or colleagues, the second in talk at a dinner table, and the third in public.

involved him both as a politician and a lawyer, and in the House on June 17 he delivered what Henry Fawcett, in a letter to him next day, described "as the best speech I ever heard you make." It dealt with the encroachment of personal government by the Viceroy or the Secretary for India in the recent affairs of that country. "No man had yet been created," he said, "who was fit to exercise uncontrolled power over two hundred millions of his fellow-creatures," and, with his acute sense of the peculiar relations of this country to India, he rebuked the tendency to disregard the constitutional checks upon autocratic action which had been lately apparent, notably in the case of the Afghan War, the Vernacular Press Act and the reduction of the cotton duties, arguing that the principle of limitation which was good for England was good also for India.

III

The death of Lady Waldegrave at this time robbed Harcourt of the oldest and most loyal of his friends. Since the now remote days when, as the wife of "Uncle George," she was the mistress of Nuneham she had taken a maternal interest in all his personal affairs and his political activities, and he, on his side, had been the bright particular star of the week-end gatherings during her later life at Strawberry Hill. His bereavement was shared by many. "I dined at Crawford's last night," wrote Henry James to Harcourt (July 9). "H.R.H. (the Prince of Wales) was *very* civil about Lady Waldegrave. When I said I had lost as good a friend as anyone could have, he said, 'You have not sustained a greater loss than I have.'" James proceeded, "He was full of Hartington's treatment and was somewhat *abusive* of Chamberlain." The antagonism of Chamberlain to Hartington was becoming as marked as Harcourt's antagonism to Gladstone had been. The previous day there had been an unusual demonstration in the House on behalf of Hartington, but directed really against Chamberlain. "Everybody on both sides abuses Chamberlain,"

wrote James, "and he has lost immense way by his conduct." But Chamberlain was not easily suppressed, and in the debate on the Army Bill he made a scornful allusion to Hartington as "the leader of a section of the Opposition." The Bill was founded on the report of the Select Committee drafted by Harcourt in the previous year, and the discussions centred largely round the question of flogging. Harcourt, anxious to save the Bill, came in for some hard hits from his own side for supporting the Government, but on the question of flogging he spoke and voted with the Opposition for its abolition. The Bill, however, was passed without that reform being conceded.

With the prorogation of Parliament, the thoughts of politicians turned to the country and the approaching election. Harcourt revelled in the smell of battle. "Election prospects in Scotland are good," he writes to Granville, "and James and I were in the thick of the Elginshire victory over the whole territorial influence of six Earls and three Dukes in one person." [1] The likelihood of the overthrow of the Government had penetrated to the most august quarters, as appears from a significant passage in Harcourt's letter to Granville:

7, GRAFTON STREET, *September* 23, 1879.—I came up last night from Scotland and met at Perth H. Ponsonby *en route* from Balmoral south. He is charged with a message to the "Chief of the Opposition" having regard to "the possibility of a change" (which it seems is now contemplated for the first time). The message is of so singular a character having regard to some passages in Hartington's speech at Newcastle that I should much like to have a few words with you on it, before I speak in Lancashire next week. It is of a most George-the-Thirdian character as to what can and cannot be submitted to. . . .

What the offence at Newcastle was can only be surmised, but probably it involved Harcourt, for he was the source of much of Hartington's eloquence. "If you can supply any hints (for his speeches at Newcastle) without robbing

[1] On Viscount Macduff's succession to the earldom of Fife, the seat for Elgin and Nairn was won (September 1879) by Sir Mac-Pherson Grant against the territorial influence of the Earl of Seafield.

yourself I shall be grateful," Hartington had written to Harcourt (September 7). Forthwith Harcourt sent off a survey of the Government's misdemeanours abroad. Hartington had expressed a desire to attack Parnell's new policy of obstruction. "I think you are quite right to speak out against Parnell, who is becoming intolerable," replied Harcourt; "but I don't know that I should make it too conspicuous a topic."

While Hartington's speeches at Newcastle had given concern in high places, they had created disquiet of another sort among the Radicals. Dilke, writing to Harcourt from Toulon, is dismayed at Hartington's and Goschen's speeches. The Radicals want three things—equalization of franchise, disestablishment, reform of the land laws:

Dilke to Harcourt.

TOULON, *September* 27, 1879.—Goschen's whole speech is an attack on the two former. . . . Hartington was supposed to have taken up the third in his House of Commons speech. I praised it in August, and he seems to have said—"Damn it; here's Dilke praising my Land speech, so it must have been a bad one," and straight—he ate it. He ate it *twice*! If you can say a word on home affairs—something on franchise or land or both—and something strong, it would do good I'm sure.

But Harcourt replies that he is going to be "long and dull." "Either things are unusually flat or I am preternaturally stupid, but I feel as if the soul of Northcote had transmigrated into me, and if I only had a flaxen beard I am sure I should deliver one of his Midland (?) speeches to admiration." He defends Hartington and continues:

Harcourt to Dilke.

. . . I am going to Knowsley for Liverpool. Indeed Lady D. (Derby) wrote to ask me *avec empressement* as soon as she knew I was going to Lancashire. I hear that Derby was received with enthusiasm at Southport the other day and Cross with marked coldness. I think the wrath of the Lancashire Achilles may do them much harm yet. . . .

There is no one in town but Rothschilds of all sorts and Ferdinand with a dislocated shoulder. I dine with the latter to-night when I am to meet Natty, R. Peel and D. Wolff. Dizzy had the last down

to Hughenden. Apropos of his K.C.B. Wolff says he has now all the letters of the alphabet except L.S.D., which are the only ones he cares for. But I hear it is seriously contemplated to give him Layard's place at Constantinople. He is really fit to be the Abbé Dubois of Dizzy's *Régence*.

Harcourt kept to his programme. His speeches at Southport (October 3) and at Liverpool (October 6) were lively and destructive criticisms, but they foreshadowed no domestic policy. He was attacked on his Southport speech for "saying the same thing," and at Liverpool replied:

If we said from the first that the Treaty of Berlin would settle nothing, and it has settled nothing—if we have predicted that Eastern Rumelia would prove a delusion, and it is a delusion—if we have affirmed that Cyprus would be good for nothing, and it is good for nothing—if we said that the Anglo-Turkish Convention was a sham, and it is a sham—if we predicted that to send an envoy to Kabul would produce disaster, and that disaster has occurred—how can we help saying the same thing?

He wrote from Knowsley to Granville (October 9) full of confidence as to the electoral outlook in Lancashire. "I have not yet dropped my lead into all the channels of this house (Lord Derby's) so I cannot give you the accurate soundings, but I shall do so before I leave on Saturday for London." Lord Derby's defection from the Government in 1878 on the calling out of the reserves, and his opposition to the acquisition of Cyprus and the Afghan policy had made the future of the "Lancashire Achilles' a matter of much political importance. No one had done more to prevent war with Russia, and, as the correspondence between the Queen and Beaconsfield (*Life of B. Disraeli*, vol. vi.) shows, he had incurred the especial wrath of Her Majesty. It is possible that he was included in that "George-the-Thirdian" message which Ponsonby had to deliver to the "Chief of the Opposition." Harcourt reverts to this matter in his letter to Granville from Knowsley:

I can tell you then of H. Ponsonby, but if you could manage to meet him (which I know he is anxious for), I think it would be a good thing. He will be for a week or ten days now at Norman Tower, Windsor, before he goes back. It is difficult without conversation

with him to understand the exact *nuances* of what he has to say. But it seems clear to me that there is a large *proscriptive list.*

It may be that Derby was on the list of undesirables ; but when the Gladstone Government was formed he declined a seat in the Cabinet as he did not wish to appear to profit by his desertion of his old party. He, however, had " taken the leap." Before leaving Harcourt wrote to Hartington the result of his " soundings " :

KNOWSLEY, *October* 10.— . . . You will receive by the same post as that by which I write this an invitation to come to Knowsley for your Manchester visit. The real meaning of such a proceeding is thoroughly understood, and is intended to have the signification which Lancashire and the rest of the country will attach to it. . . . In my opinion this step will go far to determine the whole Lancashire campaign. . . . I think it is of great consequence that you should if possible *go from hence to the Manchester meeting.* . . .

Hartington agreed to go to Knowsley, but was less confident than Harcourt of the influence of Derby. Harcourt was satisfied that he had helped to enrol a most powerful recruit who would not only carry Lancashire but would bring in the " arm-chair " people. He writes to Granville urging him also to accept an invitation from Knowsley, and, not forgetful of the virtues of publicity, writes to Frank Hill, the editor of the *Daily News* :

7, GRAFTON STREET, *October* 15, 1879.—You may announce that you are informed on good authority that the Earl of Derby has invited Lord Hartington to stay at Knowsley on the occasion of his visit to Lancashire for the Great Liberal meeting at Manchester. . . . You may comment as you please on this. *It means what it seems to mean.*

Writing to Harcourt after the Hartington visit, Lady Derby says :

KNOWSLEY, *October* 24, 1879.—The great man duly arrived, had a good reception in L'pool, made himself very pleasant here, had a good deal of talk with Ld. D. ; seemed to be suffering agonies this morning ; was occupied from 10 till 1 with his notes, refreshed himself by a solitary walk and went off to Manchester at 4. I think you may feel well pleased with having been the means of getting him here. . . . Please write to me the real truth when you have seen *him* again of what he thought of all things here. I have rarely seen anybody more shy than he was last night.

Meanwhile the Government was in its death throes. "What a wretched affair Dizzy's speech (at the Lord Mayor's banquet) is," writes Harcourt to his wife from Cambridge (November 11). "It seems to me as if the Tories were regularly cowed. They have not a stick to throw at a dog."

But if the Government were *in extremis*, the Opposition were not exactly a happy family. Victory lay before them, but whose victory would it be? It was becoming obvious, to no one perhaps more than to Hartington, that his leadership was a temporary phase and that everything depended on the decision at Hawarden. A wide gulf separated the Whigs and the Radicals, and even among the Radicals all was not brotherly love. Harcourt, writing to his wife from Cambridge in November, says:

> TRINITY COLLEGE, *Thursday evening*.— . . . I saw the Fawcetts yesterday. She very eager that Chamberlain should lose his seat for Birmingham. He did not *say*, but thought the same and said it "would do him good." I dissented strongly. How these Radicals hate one another. I suppose Dilke, Chamberlain and Fawcett are mutually very jealous and think that they will have to jostle one another for the next Cabinet. Happily I am on good terms with them all. . . .

Harcourt's eighteenth-century mind cultivated no illusions about his fellows or about himself, and Dilke records that when, a little later, he remarked to Harcourt "I believe I am the only English politician who is not jealous," Harcourt laughed very much and replied, "We all think that of ourselves," to which Dilke said, "I mean it." In the general uncertainty, Harcourt had a detachment which at once allied him with and separated him from both wings. He was "a Whig who talked Radicalism." He had been the chief backer of the Hartington leadership, but his closest political friendships were with the Radicals, and Chamberlain obviously believed that his movement would be to the Left. He wrote to him (November 2) urging him to speak at a banquet in the Birmingham Town Hall to celebrate the opening of the Birmingham Liberal Club. Harcourt declined, but Chamberlain was urgent, and pressed him to reconsider his decision as an answer to those who were labouring to

exaggerate the differences between the two sections of the Liberal Party.

With the election now imminent, the floodgates were opened in the country. Gladstone had taken the field in Midlothian in December, and had roused public feeling by the passion and energy of his eloquence. Next to him, Harcourt's speeches caught the ear of the country most effectually. Indeed in the *Life of Sir Charles Dilke*, the biographers express the view that "Harcourt's brilliant speeches at Oxford and elsewhere, full of epigrams, had more effect on the electorate than any others, not even excepting Mr. Gladstone's speeches in his Midlothian campaign."

This is an exaggeration. Neither Harcourt nor any other contemporary could draw the bow of Ulysses. They lacked the moral elevation that Gladstone communicated to the secular affairs of life and by which he touched the emotions of men to finer issues. But if this note of inspiration was absent from Harcourt's armoury, his oratory had other qualities which made him the delight of those who read him as much as of those who heard him. The breadth and sweep of his survey, the clarity of his style, the fertility of his illustrations, his journalistic art of weaving his abundant knowledge into the large pattern of his theme, above all the boisterous humour that filled the spacious sails of his rhetoric gave him a peculiar place in the public affections, and in the campaign that wrought the overthrow of the Disraelian Government he supplied the thunder to Gladstone's lightnings.

He spoke as usual at the New Year's Day dinner of the Druids at Oxford, confining himself to agricultural depression and reform and a repudiation of the argument that the depression was due to Free Trade and American competition. When wheat fell to 36*s.* in the thirties it was not due to Free Trade, for there was no Free Trade, nor to American wheat, for there was no American competition. The remedy was not to be found in the quack specifics of Protection, but in freedom for the farmer and security for the capital he

employed and freedom for the disposition of his estates to the owner of land. At Birmingham (January 20), when Bright also spoke, he introduced himself as "one of those miserable Whigs who lead an abject life under the tyranny of Mr. Chamberlain," who by "a sort of apostolic succession" had succeeded, as the archbogy of the Tory party, Mr. Bright—"a statesman who, after forty years of public service unsurpassed, unequalled, is still left to us with eye undimmed, wisdom unclouded, eloquence unquenched." Replying to the theory that the foreign policy of the Government ought not to be attacked by the Opposition, he pointed to the example of Disraeli in Opposition, and offered as the revised canon of conduct the formula, "It is the duty of a Conservative Opposition to resist a Liberal Government that seeks to keep the country at peace, but it is the duty of a Liberal Opposition to support a Conservative Government which embarks the country on war." It was in this speech that, surveying the widespread failure abroad, he dubbed Salisbury "a Bismarck *manqué*." Of the reception of the speech Henry James wrote to Lady Harcourt next day:

Henry James to Lady Harcourt.

NEW COURT, *Wednesday*.—I have been in consultation to-day with a very shrewd solicitor from Birmingham—Mr. Beale. He was present at the dinner last night. He says the speech was a wonderful performance, and sounded even better than it reads. 'Twas received with one shriek of laughter from beginning to end —and Bright and Chamberlain were tame and flat to a degree by virtue of the contrast. It certainly seems to me that the speech is the most telling *our* Master has yet delivered. . . .

Chamberlain wrote to Harcourt warmly of the wit and wisdom of the speech, and of the service he had done in promoting union. "It is a bore having no roof over your head," writes Harcourt in reply, apropos of the fact that a fire at 7 Grafton Street had just burned out his top story. The incident brought him compensation. The first visit of condolence was from Stafford Northcote, who came "to assure me that the Government were not the incendiaries.

The next was Gladstone, who came to offer us the use of his house, the amiability of which overwhelmed me." His brother Edward was less sympathetic. " My dear Willie," he said, " this comes of your carrying fireworks in your top story."

In choosing an issue for the coming election, Beaconsfield naturally wished to avoid foreign policy, and events pointed to his choice of Ireland as the one on which he would most effectively break up the Opposition attack. A by-election at Liverpool encouraged the idea. Harcourt had introduced Lord Ramsay (Earl of Dalhousie) as the Liberal candidate, and Ramsay had pledged himself to vote for " the amplest and promptest investigation into the demand for self-government." The Irish electors, however, were dissatisfied. They wanted an inquiry into the demand of the Irish people " for the restoration to Ireland of an Irish Parliament," and this the Liverpool Liberals would not concede. The difference was a discussion of local self-government or a discussion of Home Rule. The situation disclosed the vulnerable heel of the Opposition. Chamberlain, representing the Radical view on Ireland, in a letter to Harcourt (January 25) expressed a desire to recognize the nature of the Irish demand, and to hint that if the proposed changes did not satisfy the reasonable claim of the Irish people, after a fair trial, something more would have to be attempted. But this modest attitude was too much for the Whig section, and Hartington, writing to Harcourt (January 27), rejoices that Ramsay had declined to pledge himself to anything which would be understood as a Home Rule promise and adds :

> Chamberlain in a good humour appears to me more dangerous than in a bad one, and I hope he will not induce anyone else to recognize the nature of the Irish demand, and hint that if they are not satisfied something more will have to be attempted. . . .

The hostility of the Irish element at Liverpool led the Liberals to consider the withdrawal of Ramsay's candidature, and Harcourt was summoned to save the situation if possible. In his speech (February 6) he associated himself with Hartington's views on Ireland, but defended the right of an

independent candidate to a private judgment. Replying to the charge of the Tories that the Liberal party were making Home Rule "an open question," he defined an open question as one that was left open between the members of a Government, but urged that open questions did not exist for an independent candidate, pointing out that King-Harman from the Ministerial side of the House had supported a motion for an inquiry into the question of Home Rule, and not only had not been ostracized by his party, but had been made Lord-Lieutenant for Roscommon. Having met the Conservative attack, he proceeded to placate the Irish by pointing out that it was the Liberal party which had redressed the wrongs of Ireland, and that Gladstone and Bright had been pursued with virulence by the Tories on that ground.

IV

It was in vain. Ramsay was beaten by a majority of 2,221. The victory, coupled with the return about the same time of the Conservative candidate in a by-election at Southwark, decided Beaconsfield to go to the country and to go on the question of Ireland. In his letter to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland he called on "all men of light and leading to resist the destructive doctrine" of Home Rule, and with that war-cry summoned his supporters to his last political battlefield. But the current was flowing too strong to be diverted by so transparent an expedient, and as the election progressed it was obvious that the Government were in the presence of an overwhelming disaster. At Oxford Harcourt entered the field with J. W. Chitty, the Conservatives being represented by the junior sitting member A. W. Hall, who had approached Harcourt some months before with the purpose of avoiding a contest, a proposal that Harcourt declined to entertain. In his address Harcourt dismissed with scorn the suggestion of the "complicity" of the Liberal party in a scheme for the dissolution of the Union, while insisting on the right of the Irish to equal justice and equal laws. The result of the poll was

surprisingly close, but the Liberals carried the two seats, the figures being:

Harcourt	2,771
Chitty	2,669
Hall	2,659

In the country generally the tide of victory was mounting high, and Harcourt's forecasts were more than fulfilled. "The smash of Jingoism is delicious and maketh glad the heart," he wrote to Dilke. "You will have such a majority as you will not know what to do with," he told Hartington. "I am posting a cock-a-doodle-doo address to my constituents." "I always knew the country hated these chaps, and only wanted the chance to throw them out," he writes to Spencer Butler (April 6), while to Granville he rejoices that the victory leaves them independent of the Irish. "What an excellent prophet you have proved," wrote Lord Spencer in a letter rejoicing that the country had repudiated the "swaggering policy of Dizzy" in favour of the sober, sound and strong principles "such as Hartington and you and other leaders have preached." Chamberlain wrote to him (April 10), indicating the share of the Caucus in the victory, and remarked that the Liberal lions would demand a solid meal—and he straightway writes out the *menu*, land legislation, electoral reform, and so on.

But the "Liberal lions" of the Caucus demanded something more than a legislative feast. They wanted a share in the preparation of the meal. As to the *chef*, there could be no question. The election had swept away the Government, but it had also swept away the Hartington leadership. The dominion of Gladstone over the mind of the country had never been more unchallenged, and his resumption of office was a matter of course. No one was more sensible of this than Hartington, and after a few perfunctory inquiries he recommended the Queen to send for Gladstone, who thereupon set about the formation of a Cabinet, with Granville at the Foreign Office and Hartington at the India Office. Harcourt was offered the Home Secretaryship, "a heavy

task, of the highest rank," said Gladstone in the letter making the offer, ". . . in which your legal knowledge will be of the greatest use, and you will find ample scope for all your powers." It was not the office of his wish. Describing a talk with him on April 6, Dilke says, "I found his ambition to be to . . . succeed Lord Selborne as Lord Chancellor," and in order to reach that goal to have the Attorney-Generalship. This, however, went naturally to James, and Harcourt became Home Secretary. But what of the "Liberal lions"? The Whigs had got the plums, but the Radicals had to be satisfied, and Jesse Collings, the faithful voice of Chamberlain, indicated in a letter to Harcourt (April 12) that the country would expect both Dilke and Chamberlain to be in the Cabinet. With these two men in the Cabinet, all would be well. With these two men outside —well, there would be trouble. Harcourt himself was in favour of both being in. They were his close personal friends, and, though he believed himself to be a Whig, he had far more in common with them than with the right wing of the party. For Dilke he had a deep affection, which he had shown in 1875 when, as Dilke records, Harcourt had taken him, while he was suffering from a slight attack of smallpox, to his own house in order to nurse him and provide him with companionship, Loulou being sent away to escape the danger of infection.

But there were difficulties in the way of the inclusion of the two formidable Radicals in the Government. Gladstone had objections to giving Cabinet rank to men who had not been in inferior office, and Dilke himself was on the proscription list of the Queen, not only because he had pronounced in reply to a question at a meeting a more or less academic view in favour of republicanism, but also because of his attitude in regard to the Civil List. Chamberlain had proposed a compact with Dilke that they were both to be in the Cabinet or both stay out, but Dilke had persuaded him to agree to one being in the Cabinet and one having a place of influence outside. Harcourt was delegated to sound Dilke with a view to taking the Under-Secretaryship for Foreign

Affairs, but when, later, Gladstone offered him the position he asked whether Chamberlain was to be in the Cabinet, and, finding he was not, declined office. The position was serious, and in the negotiations that followed Harcourt pressed the view that one of the two must be in the Cabinet. In the end Chamberlain was sent for, and was offered and accepted the Board of Trade, whereupon Dilke took the Under-Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs.

Meanwhile Harcourt had had an unlooked-for check in the midst of the general victory. It was often his fate to be the victim of his own principles, as in the case of his famous Budget. His first speech in Parliament had been a defence of the doctrine of the vacation of seats by Ministers, under the Statute of Queen Anne, and now he was called upon to face the application of the doctrine to himself. His re-election was opposed, and he went down to Oxford on April 29 to meet the electors once more. Ten days later he telegraphed to Lady Harcourt, "It has gone wrong here. I am quite well and shall be home to-night." He had been defeated by fifty-four votes. He took his beating handsomely, remarking on the declaration of the poll that he had received too much kindness from Oxford in the past to have any sense of bitterness now. The incident aroused much indignation owing to the corrupt methods employed. Among the letters of sympathy which Harcourt received were notes from the Speaker (Brand) "deploring the mishap," while Chitty, his late colleague in the representation of Oxford, wrote:

J. W. Chitty to Harcourt.

33, QUEEN'S GATE GARDENS, S.W., May 10, 1880.—I cannot express to you how deeply I feel Saturday's defeat with which I seem, without any fault that I can discern on my part, to be most unfortunately connected. . . . You may remember what I said at Gloster Green that I would willingly jump overboard to save you. These were not idle words, uttered in the excitement of the moment. So far as I am personally concerned you may consider my seat at Oxford at your disposal. The circumstances are so peculiar that you may accept this offer without laying yourself under the slightest obligation to me. . . .

But Harcourt had closed his account with his old constituency, and henceforth his brother Edward could look out from the lawns of Nuneham to the towers of Oxford without the humiliating thought that a Radical Harcourt stained the horizon. Immediately this defeat was known Samuel Plimsoll called his supporters at Derby together and, recalling the help received in the past in his work for the seamen from Harcourt, and pointing out that as Home Secretary Sir William would be able to do much more for the cause he had at heart than he could do as a private member, induced them to accept his resignation. Harcourt was adopted as candidate, and went to Derby for his third election campaign on May 21. He carried his gaiety with him. Speaking at the Drill Hall he told his audience that he had in the train seen a copy of *Punch*, who had seized the situation with regard to himself. There was a picture of a steamer labouring in a choppy sea, which was carrying Her Majesty's Government, and " beneath, just emerging dripping from the waves, was an unfortunate being in whom—although not altogether complimentary—I could not help seeing a likeness. I thought to myself, ' Why, the draughtsman in *Punch* must have guessed Mr. Plimsoll's secret, for if a distressed seaman overboard is to look for assistance anywhere I am sure he would look for it at the hands of Mr. Samuel Plimsoll.' " The rescue was very thoroughly accomplished, for Harcourt was returned without opposition, and thus began a connection with the borough of Derby which lasted until 1895.

Meanwhile, the friends Harcourt had left behind in Oxford were preparing their revenge. An election petition was entered, and at the subsequent inquiry the election was annulled by Justices Lush and Manisty, who passed the severest strictures upon the corruption employed. The revelations were extraordinary even for so politically malodorous a constituency as Oxford. Bribery had been carried out on an astonishing scale, and Hall's expenses, returned as £3,610, were found to have been in reality £5,661, with outstanding claims for another £1,896. To complete the scandal, a remarkable letter, purporting to be from the

Chichele Professor to the Public Orator of the University, was picked up in the street, and came into the hands of the Mayor. We are sure to win, said the letter, but only on condition that another £500 can be provided over and above the Carlton £3,000. Three hundred had been raised, he himself was good for £50, and could the Public Orator produce £10 ?

The case was so glaring that it was largely responsible for the subsequent appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the election scandals, as the result of which Oxford was partially disfranchised, the vacant seat being left unfilled. If Harcourt desired revenge he had it in overflowing measure.

'À OUTRANCE!"

SIR VERNON Y^e CHALLENGER STRIKETH Y^e SHIELD OF Y^r CHIEF OPPONENT (WHO BLAZONS, ON A FIELD VERT, THREE BEACONS FLAMMANT TINSEL, FOR BEACONSFIELD. CREST—A FLIGHT OF ROCKETS, ASCENDANT. MOTTO—"PEACE WITH HONOUR").

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CHAPTER XVII

THE NEW GOVERNMENT

Legacy of trouble from the Disraeli Government—Two Parties within the Cabinet—Temperamental differences with Gladstone—The Bradlaugh episode—The Ground Game Bill—Merchant Shipping Committee—Yachting among the Western Isles—The Dulcigno demonstration—Majuba and the sequel—London Water Companies—The Miles Platting case—Society at 7, Grafton Street—Mr. Lewis Harcourt becomes his father's Secretary—A Diary.

"HE has a difficult team to drive" was the comment of Speaker Brand, surveying the new House of Commons and its leader from the detachment of the Speaker's Chair. Superficially, the omens were good. Gladstone, now well past seventy but with his intellectual powers still unabated, had returned to supreme office as the unchallenged choice of the party. In the last pitched battle he was to fight against the great antagonist with whom he had divided the stage for so many years, he had won a victory as decisive as any in parliamentary annals. Disraelian Imperialism had been swept from the field, and the country, weary of wars and panics and adventures, had turned with overwhelming emphasis to a leader from whom it expected less romance and more peace of mind. The Parliamentary position had been almost exactly reversed by the election. The preceding House of Commons contained 348 Conservatives, 250 Liberals, and 54 Home Rulers. The House that met on April 29 contained 353 Liberals, 238 Conservatives, and 61 Home Rulers.

With so formidable a backing, the prospects of the new Government seemed cheerful enough. The omens, however, were deceptive. A new Government is not called on

to start a new business, but to carry on an old one, with all its liabilities, commitments, and unsettled problems. These alone were heavy enough to try the wisdom and solidarity of the new Administration. The waters of continental diplomacy were still heaving with the backwash of the storm that had passed and with the problems left by the Berlin settlement; the discontents aroused in South Africa by the activities of Bartle Frere, and especially by the ill-advised annexation of the Transvaal, were beginning to assume menacing shape; Ireland, under the bold and masterful leadership of Parnell, had developed a new strategy of revolt that threatened to make government impossible; in Egypt, the understanding which France and England had arrived at in the last year of Disraeli's Government had committed us to a policy of intervention which was soon to blaze up in unforeseen troubles. The new Ministry had succeeded to as disturbed an inheritance as any Government were ever set to administer.

Nor were the dangers that enveloped it limited to events. A stormy crew were set to navigate a stormy sea. The Gladstone Government of 1868–74 had been homogeneous and manageable. In spite of the inclusion of men like Bright and Forster it had represented the moderate traditions of the old Whig school, with the dominating and fervid genius of Gladstone as its sole inspiration. But the new Government was composed of frankly hostile elements. The victory at the polls had been the victory of Gladstone plus the Caucus, and though the Whigs had taken the lion's share of office the Radicals knew their power in the country, and under the leadership of Chamberlain were determined to make their views operative in affairs. Gladstone was no longer the lawgiver of an obedient Cabinet, but the moderator between two forces that clashed violently on nearly every cardinal issue of politics. And his difficulties were not confined to his own parliamentary household. Across the floor of the House there loomed the promise of afflictions new to the experience of Governments. In the past the theory of Opposition had been that its function was

to set up a rival policy for the well-being of the Commonwealth. Parnell had fashioned an instrument of opposition that aimed at making government not better, but impossible. He had served his apprenticeship in the art of guerilla warfare, and now, the acknowledged chief of the Irish phalanx, prepared to put his theories of frankly destructive opposition into ruthless practice. Moreover in the Fourth Party, with Randolph Churchill as its head, the formal opposition of the Conservative party developed a ferocity of attack that disregarded all the accepted rules of parliamentary conflict.

The troubled story of the second Gladstone Administration, however, does not belong to the theme of this book, and it will be referred to only in so far as it touches Harcourt's activities. He had come into the control of a department that engaged all his energies, and for the next five years his history is not mainly concerned with those world affairs that had chiefly occupied his mind in the past, but with the internal problems of justice and social order and with the struggle in Ireland. In the Cabinet, of course, he took his part in shaping the general policy of the Government, and in his speeches in the country he revelled as of old in the joy of battle, but in Parliament he kept to his own abundant tasks. With closer intercourse, the ascendancy which Gladstone had exercised over his mind in the sixties, and which had been interrupted by the conflict over the Public Worship Act, began to resume its sway. The temperamental clash of the mystic and the Erastian, of a spirit that dwelt in the sanctuary and of a spirit that lived in the statute book, remained, and on the plane of fellowship of feeling they never shared that comradeship which marked the relations of Harcourt and Chamberlain. Gladstone had no levity in his equipment, and never forgave levity in others. He did not understand that one could jest and be serious, and it may be doubted whether he would have survived a single meeting of Lincoln's Cabinet. Harcourt's sense of humour did not indulge in the licence which Lincoln's enjoyed, but it coloured all he

said and did. It was the atmosphere in which his personality clothed itself, and laughter was his authentic weapon of attack as much as moral passion was Gladstone's. The conflict of outlook had its counterpart in difference of tastes. Both had an enormous appetite for work, but while Gladstone went for his recreation to the classics, Harcourt, though he preserved his love of the classics, found his chief joy in blue-books and statutes, and was an omnivorous reader of history, memoirs, biography, and poetry. Gladstone had no interest in sport and was much of an ascetic, while Harcourt delighted in yachting and deer-stalking and had a hearty appetite for the pleasures of life. Gladstone loathed tobacco, while Harcourt was one of the most industrious smokers of his generation, consuming something like sixteen cigars a day, good, bad, and indifferent, for in these matters he was no connoisseur. Sir Algernon West records that when acting as secretary to Gladstone at the Treasury his chief once accused him of smelling strongly of tobacco. "I don't wonder," replied West, "for I have been sitting for half an hour in Sir William Harcourt's room." "Does Harcourt smoke?" asked Gladstone in a voice of horror; "if so, he must be very careful to change his clothes before he comes to me." But in spite of these and many other points of disagreement, and in spite of their conflicts in the past, the relations between the two men from 1880, if not undisturbed, became increasingly cordial. Gladstone was sensible of the unrivalled pile-driving power of his lieutenant, and Harcourt, having sown those "wild oats" with which his senior had taunted him in years gone by, came eventually under the dominion of Gladstone's influence more completely than under that of any personal relation in his career, except that of Cornewall Lewis.

Before the new Parliament had been sworn in the storm burst over it with almost unprecedented intensity. It is not necessary here to recall the incidents of the Bradlaugh episode. In these more tolerant days it is difficult to understand the passion of that prolonged and discreditable

conflict, the result of which was the exclusion of the member for Northampton from the House. In the fierce debates on the subject Harcourt took some part. Writing to Gladstone, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

HOME DEPARTMENT, *June* 25.—I had a long talk with Labouchere last night. He will try to persuade Bradlaugh not to present himself to-day so that if the motion to rescind the Resolution is brought on there may be behind it the fear of the scandal of his reappearance, which would actuate many in their vote.

The more I think of it the more convinced I feel it would be most disastrous if you were driven into taking the initiative against Bradlaugh. Your situation hitherto has been impregnable, and I cannot see what further right or power the Opposition have now than before of casting on you the responsibility of action. If the motion is made that he shall be excluded from the precincts of the House he will be finally *done for*. There will no longer be any method by which he can vindicate his right, for as I said last night there is no legal remedy. His only chance is in the appeal to public opinion involved in his imprisonment. If he is snuffed out in the other way I do not see what further resource remains to him.

If the Tories are once assured that Bradlaugh can no longer intrude himself on the House they will never rescind the Resolution—in fact the situation will be exactly what they would most desire, and they will certainly not help us out of the scrape.

The prolonged and unseemly struggle which followed closed with the election of a new Parliament, when Bradlaugh, returned once more by Northampton, took his seat, the Speaker declining to take cognizance of what had gone before. He became one of the most useful and respected members of the House, and when he lay on his death-bed the House of Commons formally removed from its records the resolution of exclusion that had been carried with such tumultuous enthusiasm ten years before.

Owing to the brevity of the Session, the legislative programme of the Government was necessarily slight, but Harcourt had a substantial part of it allotted to him. The devastation by hares and rabbits had long been a standing grievance of the farmers, and in the closing days of the late Government, P. A. Taylor had moved the abolition of the Game Laws. Another member proposed that it

"is not now expedient to deal with the question," whereupon Harcourt had moved to amend the amendment by leaving out the word "not." In the result Harcourt was beaten by only 18 votes. With his accession to office he promptly set about the preparation of a Bill to give "more effectual protection to occupiers of land against injury from ground game." In a formal letter to the Queen, describing the purport of the measure, he said:

HOME DEPARTMENT, *May* 31.—The object of this Bill is to remove a grievance which has long been felt and which has led to much ill-will between landlords and tenants, particularly in Scotland. The special feature of this Bill is section 3, which makes that right inalienable and invalidates all contracts in contravention of the right of the tenant to kill the ground game so that he cannot be forced by his landlord to contract himself out of it. This has become necessary in consequence of the inveterate habit of reserving the game in leases and the practice of letting the game to third persons over the head of the tenant.

Through Sir H. Ponsonby, the Queen replied that, while lamenting the evils caused by over-preservation, she "does not like the prohibition of amicable contracts between landlord and tenant, and fears that the intervention of law between persons who have hitherto been on friendly terms will lead to the creation of a bad feeling between these classes." Her Majesty was also concerned to know "whether the cancelling of all contracts of this nature will not involve great hardship in many cases and be a novel and serious interference with the rights of property?"

In his reply Harcourt stated with great clearness the case for interference with the liberty of making contracts "in cases where a practical monopoly in the hands of one of the parties to the contract does in effect limit the freedom of the other in the bargain":

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

HOME DEPARTMENT, *June* 5.— . . . Thus in the Merchant Shipping Acts it has been found necessary to protect sailors against contracts which the shipowners would have power to force upon them to their detriment. So in the case of Railways which have a virtual monopoly of transport the Companies are not allowed to

make stipulations, even if agreed to by their customers, which would relieve them from the liability to compensation for loss or damage. The same thing is done in the Truck Acts when employers of labour are forbidden to make agreements with their workmen to take their wages in goods supplied by the master. A cabman is not allowed to make what bargain he likes for the conveyance of a passenger. The law is full of such examples, founded on the principle that when one party has what amounts to a monopoly giving to him an overwhelming advantage in the bargain the power of contracting on the other side is not really "free." If all the landlords, as a class, insist on reserving the ground game, the tenants, though nominally free to contract on the subject, have no real power to make their own terms. If they had, the evils so much complained of would not exist. . . . The tenants are comparatively content that the landlord should enjoy his sport even if they suffer somewhat by it, it is part of the friendly social relation which exists between them. On one estate with which Sir William Harcourt is personally connected, and where it has always been the practice to let the tenants have the game, they voluntarily abstain from shooting until the landlord and his friends have taken the first day's sport. But what the farmers cannot endure is that a stranger of whom they know nothing and for whom they care nothing should keep up a large head of game at their expense.

He pointed out that, without the clause preventing landlords from contracting out of the Bill, the measure would be a mere empty declaration of principle, and by way of illustration referred to the experience in the case of the Agricultural Holdings Act, the purpose of which had been defeated by the landlords contracting out.

Writing on the subject to the Duke of Argyll, he says:

HOME OFFICE, *June* 4, 1880.— . . . The drafting of the Bill gave me immense trouble before it was got into what is I think now a tolerably clear and simple form.

The Squires ground their teeth over it dreadfully, especially on our side, *but they dare not bite at it* for fear of their constituents. But I go about in bodily fear for my life, as I believe that all the best shots in England have marked me down as a dead man. . . .

The Bill, under its original title of the Hares and Rabbits Bill, was introduced by Harcourt in a reasonable and moderate speech on May 27, the day on which he took his seat as member for Derby. He proposed that every occupier of land should, as an incident of and during his occupation,

have a right by himself and by any person properly employed by him to destroy ground game on the land, such person not to be entitled to divest himself of that right or to delegate it, and to exercise the right concurrently with and not excluding any person entitled to kill such game, that is to say, that if the landlord reserved the right to kill game he should still keep it, but concurrently with the tenant, who would also have the right to kill ground game. The Bill excited very great alarm in some quarters. Mr. Henry Chaplin was especially disturbed, and at every stage of the Bill found that some desperate results must follow so deplorable an interference with the rights of landlords to make what covenants they pleased with their tenants. He talked at great length on the dangers of "confiscatory legislation." Persons wrote to *The Times* about "an inalienable concurrent right to slaughter the unfortunate bunnies and pussies." Where, asked one, was such legislation to stop? Were deer forests to be turned into sheep-walks, parks to be ploughed up for turnips, flower gardens to grow cabbages?

In Committee a vast number of amendments were put on the paper. They were indeed so numerous as to give colour to the allegation of deliberate obstruction. On the other hand, the Bill did not go far enough to please the Radical members, who would have liked to see a measure dealing drastically with the whole question of the Game Laws, but Harcourt's best ally was Bright, who pointed out that at common law the right of killing game on his holding belongs to the tenant in the absence of a definite contract to the contrary, and that all that the Bill proposed to do was to give him a moiety of his original right. The Bill emerged from Committee on August 28 with its principle intact. Although serious opposition was anticipated in the Lords it was eventually returned to the Commons without radical amendment, and the Lords did not persist in those changes which Harcourt was not prepared to accept. Beaconsfield had given the wise advice not to quarrel with the other House except on the gravest

matters, and, as he pointed out, these graver matters were likely to be the foreign policy and the Irish policy of the Government. It came in time to be recognized that the Act had not only done justice to the farmers, but had saved winged game and the Game Laws themselves from extinction.

With this modest triumph Harcourt began his legislative career. The feeling which his success aroused among certain of the landowning class was reflected in the following letter (September 6) which he received from Sir Rainald Knightley, M.P. : [1]

FAWSLEY, *September* 6.—I send the enclosed in payment of the debt to which you are technically entitled—as you have passed a wretched remnant of the revolutionary rubbish which you originally introduced. I am aware that postage stamps are not required while you are in office—but the time is not far distant when they will again be available, and I cannot pay you in the way you propose, as I do not know where to look for a hare on this property, and my tenants have so effectually kept down the rabbits (*without* the concurrent right to the use of a gun) that I do not feel justified in depriving the poor foxes of even three of the few that are left.

II

While Harcourt was piloting his Hares and Rabbits Bill through Parliament he was promoting another cause in which he had always been deeply interested, and which his succession to Plimsoll at Derby had imposed on him as a personal trust. He served on a Select Committee, presided over by Chamberlain, which was appointed to inquire into the losses at sea sustained by British merchant shipping. He brought all the skill he had acquired at the Parliamentary Bar to bear on the cross-examination of witnesses. Commenting on the inquiry *The Times* made playful allusion to the conflict between Harcourt and Chamberlain. "If the Home Secretary," it said, "appeared to

[1] It was this correspondent who was the subject of one of the happiest and most familiar of Harcourt's *bons mots*. Sir Rainald was discoursing on the splendour of his ancestry when Harcourt, who was of the company, was heard to murmur :

"And Knightley to the listening earth
Repeats the story of his birth."

demolish a witness by a shower of incisive questions, the President of the Board of Trade came to the rescue with no less acuteness. Powers and principalities were arrayed against each other, and Mr. Chamberlain's influence balanced Sir William Harcourt's." When the Committee reported in July they made useful recommendations on the better stowing of grain to avoid "shifting" and the resulting danger to the ship. These recommendations were incorporated in the Merchant Shipping Bill of the following year.

"Thank God Parliament is over at last," Harcourt wrote to Lord Derby (September 5) in the course of a letter in which, referring to one of the opponents of the Hares and Rabbits Bill, he asked: "Why don't you 'name' Redesdale to your House and have him suspended or he might be locked up in the Victoria Tower chained to Denman. What a perverse wrong-headed old animal it is." To Ponsonby he writes (September 7): "And on the 16th I hope to be at Oban where I mean to wash the taste of Parliament out in the waters of the Hebrides." He had telegraphed to some yacht agents at Glasgow for a yacht, and received a reply from the Lord Provost of Glasgow (William Collins), one of his political admirers, to whom the telegram had been shown, and who offered him the use of his own yacht *Fingal*, 165 tons, and the services of his own captain and crew. Harcourt was accompanied on the cruise by Lady Harcourt and their infant son, and writing from Glen Quoich, Invergarry (September 24), he sent "Dearest Lou" a record of the tour. At "dear old Kyleakin," he said, "the folk flocked round, very glad to see me again." All traces of the old yacht *Loulou* had disappeared, but he had seen one of the old crew and given him £5, which "rejoiced his old heart."

> . . . Yesterday, we spent the morning wandering about Kyleakin, and up to the Castle, then to Balmacarra to get telegraphic news of Bobby who went up on Monday for an excursion with his three female attendants in the *Iona* to Ballachulish. Then we sailed up Loch Duich which looked more lovely than ever. In the evening

we dropped anchor at the top of Loch Hourn just opposite the little cottages where you and I stayed the first time we were there. It was a delicious night and we were surrounded as you and I were by herring boats—the loch was full of fish and they could hardly carry the quantity they caught. I landed and sent up a note by Campbell to Glen Quoich and found a letter from Mrs. Arthur Bass in the morning to say the wagonette would be at the Loch at 8, so I drove up here only for two hours. . . .

The only fly in the ointment is the absence of Loulou. "As I visit each of our old haunts the first thought in my mind is 'Oh, if only Loulou were here how much more I could enjoy it.'" He was expecting "Jimmy" (Henry James), and on his arrival proposed to sail the yacht down Loch Hourn.

But a few days later he was back in London, summoned thither to a Cabinet meeting. The troubles, which were to engulf the new Ministry, were becoming more grave, in Ireland, in South Africa and in the Near East. At the moment the chief anxiety centred in the non-fulfilment by Turkey of the provisions of the Berlin Treaty relating to Montenegro and Greece, and the naval demonstration off Dulcigno had taken place on September 14. It had, however, only revealed that the European concert was, in Gladstone's phrase, "a farce," for Austria and Germany were cold supporters of Gladstone's move, and France was not warm. The situation was critical. Scenting disagreement between the Powers, the Sultan was obdurate, and a grave decision confronted the Cabinet. They could rely on Russia and Italy to support them in a policy of coercion. but what of the reactions of that policy elsewhere? Writing to Granville (September 30), Harcourt said: "What you said to-night is quite enough to determine me not to leave the deck or to return as I intended to Scotland to-morrow. The only thing I have to consider is whether I can be of the smallest service to you now." He recalled his relations with Schuvaloff in Opposition days, and the valuable information he received. Should he see his successor, Bartolomei, who might tell him things which he might not think it politic to tell the Foreign Secretary? But he

could not take this *démarche* without Granville's concurrence. "When I was a free lance I did what I liked. It is different now." On October 4 came the Sultan's refusal to fulfil the conditions, and Harcourt wrote (October 5) a long memorandum to Granville urging a circular letter to the Powers, pointing out the obduracy of Turkey, the assent of the Powers to the Dulcigno demonstration, the implication of that assent that they were prepared to coerce Turkey, and suggesting that they should jointly occupy Smyrna. If this were not done independent action with all its consequences would follow, and the securities for peace which the Concert of Europe had designed to establish would go. He concluded:

> . . . I think something of this kind would place us *rectus in curia* both in Europe and in England. It would show that it was not we who shrink back at the critical moment. If we are to fall we should at least fall with dignity. We shall have recommended to Europe the course she ought to pursue. If she will not *tant pis pour elle*. Austria will be the first and the greatest sufferer. As for us disengaged from all our obligations we can always defend our real interests with our fleet if they were attacked. And so we may bid good-bye to the Turk if not with glory at least without dishonour.

This course was adopted, and the Government prepared to proceed with Russia and Italy. But the Sultan was bluffing. Dulcigno and the appeal of Great Britain to the Powers to coerce had done their work. Harcourt, who had returned to Oban, wrote (October 10) to Lord Derby, saying he had lost a week of his month's holiday by a Cabinet meeting, and was dreading a telegram announcing another. Instead came a letter from Granville:

Granville to Harcourt.

> FOREIGN OFFICE, *October* 12.—Thanks for note. Happy man to have escaped all we have gone through. We were low on Saturday, frightfully elated on Sunday, when the news came that the Turks had verbally promised cession. We countermanded Cabinet—desiring the first telegram to be sent to Oban. All Monday we were plunged in despair again, Goschen [special ambassador at Constantinople] firing off at intervals that no note was come.
>
> This morning a telegram arrived, "Note is to come, but is to be evacuation, not cession, only the old proposal."

I found Gladstone simply furious, suggesting all sorts of fanciful messages, but he calmed down. I went home and found a second telegram "all right"—returned to No. 10 (Downing Street), and before speaking executed a *pas seul* to his intense indignation at my intemperate gaiety.

It is an intense relief. They will probably do us out of a bit of frontier, but I don't mind. Do you?

The note that had set Granville dancing before the outraged majesty of his Chief was, so far as Montenegro was concerned, a complete surrender. There had not been so striking a success in British foreign policy for many a long day, and in far-away Oban it may be assumed that Granville's *pas seul* was imitated a trifle ponderously on the deck of the *Fingal*.

But the troubles were not at an end: they had only changed their scene. Parnell had made his famous Ennis speech in September, and there had immediately followed the "boycotting" of Captain Boycott and, later, the arrest of the Irish leaders, including Parnell. With the new phase of the Irish struggle, which all this foreshadowed, I must deal later. An even more disquieting conflagration had broken out far away. The murmurs of discontent from the Transvaal had grown in volume during the summer and autumn, and on December 16 the Boers declared for a Republican Government. The situation confronted the Cabinet with grave peril of disruption. It had come into office with a tolerably unanimous conviction that the annexation was morally wrong and politically unwise.

That had been Harcourt's position, and he had reaffirmed it in a memorandum to Gladstone since he had taken office. But now that the issue was raised in this challenging form the course of action was infinitely complicated, and the conflict of voices within the Cabinet was acute. Harcourt, writing to Chamberlain, said his advice to all was to stick to the ship, keep her head to the wind and cram her at it. "There is no danger in facing a difficulty, but much in running away from it." How the Government sought to avert a war, the idea of which they loathed, and how events drifted them into it; how the unfortunate General Colley

misapprehended the situation, floundered in policy and failed in the field; how the check at Laing's Nek was followed by the disaster of Majuba Hill, and how, following the disaster, the Government restored the independence of the Transvaal—all this is familiar and does not belong to my subject. Harcourt's own view of the episode was given later in the year, when (October 25, 1881) he went to Glasgow to receive the freedom of the city and afterwards addressed a meeting in St. Andrew's Hall. When the annexation was found to have been carried without the consent of the people, its continuance would have been an act of aggression. But the charge against the Government was not that they had conceded unfair terms to the Boers, but that they had conceded them after defeat. To this attack he replied:

> Now that is a perfectly intelligible issue and I meet it front to front. It is not a question of political expediency, it is a fundamental question of political ethics. It is a question of the justice or injustice of bloodshed. We were not responsible for the defeat of Majuba Hill. It was the unfortunate tactical error of a gallant man. But what the Government were responsible for was the conduct of the English nation after the disaster. Were we to say "There were terms which we would have given to these men before the battle was fought or if the battle had resulted in a victory. We will not give them now until we have wiped out that repulse in blood"? That is the policy of Lord Salisbury. . . . He says our conduct was a stain upon the escutcheon of England, and these were his words: "In every contest which the Government have to wage—military, diplomatic and domestic—the stain of that defeat will be upon them, and they will feel that they are fighting under the shadow of Majuba Hill." That is the language of Lord Salisbury. It is the language which, in my opinion, the better sort of pagans would have been ashamed of. . . . Lord Salisbury's doctrine is that the honour of a nation consists in the vengeance which it exacts. We believe that what was right before the defeat of Majuba Hill was equally right just after it. Such vengeance is not a preliminary right, and we did not think it right either before God or man to shed innocent blood when we could make the same peace before a battle which we could have made after it. I am not for peace at any price. I hold the opinion that nations, like individuals, may assert their just rights and defend them by force, but I regard it as a crime of the most heinous dye to continue war when all the effects may be produced by peace, and to take men's lives merely

for the glory of victory is in my judgment the policy of savages and heathens, and would be a foul dishonour to the Government of a civilized nation.

III

But while these events were occupying the centre of the stage, Harcourt was more intimately engaged in a subject of another sort much nearer home. It was the question of London's water supply. This troublesome problem, which raised the whole subject of the anomalies existing in the local government of London, was an inheritance from the late Government. Indeed, their conduct of this business was one of the immediate causes of the entire discredit into which the Government fell. They were said to have "come in on beer and gone out on water." Cross, the Home Secretary, had brought forward a Metropolitan Water Works Purchase Bill at the beginning of March 1880 proposing to create a central body to which all the existing companies should transfer their property and surrender their powers. The stock to be transferred was estimated by Cross at between twenty-seven and twenty-eight millions sterling, and the companies were to take the new 3½ per cent. stock to be issued by the new body in payment.

This Bill was not discussed in the House, but raised violent criticism throughout London. The Government estimate of the value of the companies' stock was held to be outrageously high, and it was alleged in support of this contention that the shares of the companies had risen enormously on the market in expectation of the purchase. The *Standard* said that in the course of a year an addition had been made to the selling price of the shares, which, in the case of the Lambeth Company, was more than £100 per share, while the Kent Company had an addition of £126, and the Southwark Company as much as £170.

Perhaps the best comment on the Government figures is the published statement of accounts of the companies for the year 1879, which gave the total share, loan and debenture capital of all the companies as £12,256,430.

At a very early stage in his administration of the Home

Office Harcourt had to define his attitude on this matter. He told a deputation from the Metropolitan Board of Works that it was essential to consider not only whether the companies' terms were reasonable, but whether the supply was sufficiently good to be worth purchasing at all. On June 4 he proposed the appointment of a Select Committee, to which the provisional agreements drawn under Cross's proposals were referred, but the primary business of the Committee was to consider the expediency of buying on behalf of the people of London the undertakings of the companies. This left the question of securing a fresh supply open. Within a week the Committee had commenced their sittings, and they elected Harcourt as their chairman. There is an excellent, if hostile, picture of Harcourt's attitude on this Committee in Lord George Hamilton's *Reminiscences and Reflections*:

> . . . Harcourt, instead of acting in a judicial capacity, led the opposition to the agreement by a merciless cross-examination of Smith [E. J. Smith, who had made the agreement on behalf of Cross], and brought all his great legal attainments to bear in breaking down the statements made by that gentleman. The Metropolitan Water Board and the City of London were both hostile to the Bill, so the able counsel that were employed by these two bodies harried on both flanks the unfortunate Smith. Sir Richard Cross was somewhat dazed by the late defeat of the Government, and we could not get him in any way to exercise his faculties or to stand up against the onslaught made upon his agreement. The Committee were obviously appointed to kill the agreement, which they did. Harcourt, with great skill, fastened upon the one weak point in the general agreement made with the Water Companies. It was very essential to bring in all the companies, and the weakest company, namely, the Chelsea Water Company, held out and only could be induced to come in by an offer of exceptionally good terms. Upon these good terms Harcourt and the counsel concentrated their attention, and practically they never went outside this one particular point of the agreement. The Committee reported against the whole Agreement.
>
> When the report was under consideration I was obliged to be away, but neither Sclater Booth nor I could induce Cross to draw up a separate report or to move the amendments which would have vindicated our position. The agreement was therefore repudiated.

"The sequel of the proceedings of the Committee was

sad," continues Lord George Hamilton. "Smith, who was in bad health at the time of his examination, suddenly died. Harcourt, who was a very kind man at heart, was frightfully perturbed at the result of his unfair treatment of Smith. He came over to us in the Opposition in the House of Commons almost with tears in his eyes, and stated he had only wished he had known that Smith was in bad health when he was under cross-examination."

Harcourt himself drew up the Report, which contained some very plain speaking on the financial proposals of the companies. They had asserted their right to escape from limitations of their charges under the title of back dividends, estimated at twenty million sterling. The New River Company had given the astounding figure of £15,000,000 as back dividend. If these contentions could be maintained the four millions of Londoners would be at the mercy of the trading companies who would be able to raise the price of one of the prime necessaries of life practically without limit. If the purchase of the undertakings at any price the companies might like to fix were the only remedy the consequences to the consumer of the improvident legislation of the past would be indeed intolerable, but Parliament had powers to redress such grievances.

The Committee recommended that the water supply should be placed under the control of a single public body with statutory powers, which should have the confidence of the ratepayers, and which should be empowered to acquire existing sources of supply or to have recourse to others. This *ad hoc* body should represent the Corporation of the City of London, the Metropolitan Board of Works and, in addition, the districts lying outside the jurisdiction of these authorities which were supplied by the companies. They declined to recommend the confirmation of the agreements negotiated with the companies by E. J. Smith on behalf of Cross, which seemed to them to be founded on assumptions which could not be substantiated on the future growth of the receipts and on the amount of new capital expenditure which might be required to meet the increased

demands. These agreements would have involved an expenditure, the Committee estimated, of £33,000,000. The price actually paid when the water companies' stock was purchased in 1902 was £46,000,000, inclusive of legal costs.

This question of the water supply became involved in the proposed legislation for the reform of London government. The draft of the measure was prepared by Harcourt in 1881, but a dispute arose between Gladstone and Harcourt over the control of the Metropolitan Police, and the actual Bill was not brought forward until 1884, when, with other measures, it was jettisoned to clear the decks for the settlement of the dispute with the House of Lords over the Franchise proposals.

IV

Such differences as occurred between Gladstone and Harcourt were marked on both sides by an increasing friendliness. That was so even in ecclesiastical matters. In connection with the case of the Rev. Sidney Green, the rector of Miles Platting in the diocese of Manchester, who was sentenced on March 19, 1881, and sent to Lancaster Gaol for offences against the Public Worship Regulation Act, Gladstone was profoundly troubled. He was a High Anglican himself, and Church scandals always pained him. Harcourt's frame of mind on the subject was much more jovial, and he held firmly to his view that in the affairs of the Church, Parliament was the constitutional authority. The question of Green's release assumed the magnitude of a national controversy, and in July the Lower House of Convocation asked the Bishops to use their influence to secure the rector's release. But the Bishops would not move. There was nothing to be done except for Mr. Green to obey "the godly admonition of his Bishop," and this Mr. Green could not be prevailed on to do. The imprisonment of a priest was a source of acute distress to Gladstone, who sought to prevail on Harcourt to release Green on medical grounds. "I think all parties would be much pleased," he wrote to Harcourt (September 9), "if there

were a sufficient case of health to get Mr. Green out of his *quandary* and many others out of serious embarrassment." But Harcourt was genially adamant. He had no love for the Ritualist and a great deal of love for the law. Replying to Gladstone (September 10) from Loch Alsh, where he was "living an amphibian life, partly on our steam yacht, partly on shore in a country which pleases me more than any I know," he says:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

. . . And now to business. The Rev. Green is the most embarrassing of martyrs. Immediately on receipt of your letter enclosing Mr. Belcher's first communication, I wrote to the Prison Commissioners for a report on Mr. G.'s health with a significant hint that I should be very glad of an excuse to release him on medical grounds if there was a decent pretext. In return to this invitation I have received the report I enclose which is very disappointing. What is one to do with a martyr who gains 9 lbs. in weight in his bondage? It shows the prison fare is very good or that like Daniel he thrives on the pulse. I suppose he is denied the opportunities of emaciation which he enjoys when at large. It is very puzzling to know what to do now my attempts at a "pious fraud" have been defeated. My prisoners will grow so fat. Davitt adds pounds to his scale every week. It seems a positive cruelty to release them from a life which agrees with them so well. The difficulty I feel is to find a decent excuse to let out a man who has been imprisoned for his refusal to obey the law whilst he still insists on his right to disobey it. It is not like the accrued penalty for an isolated act. Mr. G. can walk out of prison any day that he chooses to purge his contempt. . . .

In a later letter (October 22) written to Gladstone from Balmoral Castle, where he was in attendance, Harcourt pointed out that the folly of Green's friends made it more difficult to do anything for him. The Puseyites were defying Parliament and repudiating all lay authority on ecclesiastical affairs. "This is pretty strong considering that the Prayer Book was established and enacted by Parliament in the reign of Elizabeth against the votes of the whole spiritualty, and that the Anglican Church owed its existence to the laity turning out all the Bishops." The struggle over the resolute Mr. Green continued for many months,

but Harcourt at last shifts his "old man of the sea" on to the shoulders of the Lord Chancellor (Lord Selborne). Writing to Granville, he advises him to leave the answer to Salisbury to Selborne:

HOME OFFICE, *October* 26, 1882.— . . . He is an ecclesiastically-minded man (far more than I have inherited from my ancestors) and if he cannot defend a good case can at all events gloss over a bad one. I remember Bob Lowe said, "If I had a very good case I should choose Cairns as my counsel because he would make every one understand how good a case I had; if I had a bad case I should select Selborne because he would conceal from every one how bad my case was. . . .

In the end towards the close of November Green was released on the application of Dr. Fraser, Bishop of Manchester, to the Court of Arches, and so, after eighteen months, the issue was amicably arranged.

During his official life Harcourt continued the custom of entertaining which he had begun after his second marriage, and the dinners at 7, Grafton Street assumed considerable political significance, owing to the very catholic company that used to be brought together. One of them (March 6, 1881) had a double interest. It was the last dinner that Beaconsfield attended (he died on April 19 following), and it was the occasion of the reconciliation of Lord Lytton and Lord Hartington, who up to that time had not met since their difference over the former's Indian policy. At these dinners the most various social and political currents were present, and it was no uncommon thing to see that stern and unbending Tory, Mr. (now Lord) Chaplin side by side with Dilke or Chamberlain, or Bright and the Prince and Princess of Wales, or Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone in company with the American Ambassador or the Dean of Westminster. The records of these gatherings were kept by the late Lord Harcourt. He had now begun to assume a new relation to his father. Always delicate, he was in 1881 threatened with lung trouble, and the two succeeding winters were in consequence spent at Madeira. This fact interfered with the idea of a Cambridge career, and marked out another course for him, which the deep attachment that

existed between father and son encouraged. At the suggestion of Mr. Justice Hawkins, Lewis Harcourt went on circuit as Marshal to that formidable judge, dined at the Bar mess, wrote jocular letters of his experiences to his father whom he addressed as "My dearest H.S." (Home Secretary), and won the encomiums of his Chief. From these adventures he drifted into that association with his father as his constant companion and private secretary which continued to the end of Harcourt's career, and became a tradition of the political world. To this association we owe a journal kept by the younger Harcourt which throws many sidelights on Harcourt's official life. For the most part it refers only to the years in which Harcourt was in office. It was written day by day, sometimes hour by hour, and was placed by Lord Harcourt at my disposal. In quoting from it, I shall indicate the source by appending the letter "H" in brackets. This chapter may be appropriately closed with some notes from this diary of a visit by Harcourt and his son to the Gladstones at Hawarden Castle under date November 3, 1881:

There was some discussion about the telegraph system in England, and both Gladstone and W.V.H. agreed that when they were bought by the Post Office in 1870 the price which F. T. Scudamore (the Secretary to the G.P.O.) gave for them was unnecessarily large as it was twenty years' purchase on their then income and an allowance for the prospective increase in the next ten years. W.V.H. was himself counsel for the submarine lines a short time afterwards, and in order to get as large a price as possible for his clients went minutely into the former transaction and threatened to show up Scudamore if he did not deal with the submarine companies on the same scale as he had done with the others. This so alarmed Scudamore that he immediately gave in, and so one bad bargain unintentionally let him in for another. . . .

Apropos of Gladstone being unpopular in Court circles, I asked if it were ever known why he was not invited to the Duke of Connaught's wedding. W.V.H. said that whilst at Balmoral this year Henry Ponsonby told him that the Queen said that it was the custom to ask only the Leader of the Opposition, and as Gladstone had voluntarily given up that post the invitation must go to Lord Hartington.

Last night Gladstone told W.V.H. that he had taken the Premiership for a special purpose, which was to introduce the Irish Land

Bill, and since that had been accomplished he does not wish to retain office, at least after Ireland has been pacified.

Walking to the Rectory this morning I had some conversation with Mrs. Gladstone. She said that Mr. Gladstone has really been thinking seriously of retiring and gave as his chief reason that he felt he was keeping Hartington and Granville—who have had all the hard work of opposition—out of the place which they had a right to expect, and Mrs. Gladstone herself was rather in favour of his abdication.

W.V.H. was rather mischievously complaining of the obstinacy and stinginess of the Treasury, and when Mr. Gladstone said, "I do not think they ought to be accused of that," W.V.H. replied, "Ah, you have never suffered under the Treasury as we do. I think the national expenditure ought to increase in proportion to the spread of wealth. Why don't you let the country live like a gentleman?" "Because," said Mr. Gladstone, "living like a gentleman means paying five times its value for everything you buy." [H.]

CHAPTER XVIII

AT THE HOME OFFICE

Multifarious duties—Sir E. Ruggles-Brise's recollections of the Home Secretary — Under-Secretaries — Juvenile Offenders—Capital Punishment — Correspondence with the Queen on remission of sentences — The Queen on wife-murder — The Most case — The Queen's Safety — Lord Rosebery and Scottish business—Conflict over the Queen's Speech—Residence at Balmoral—The domestic circle.

LEAVING the larger issues that occupied the mind of the Government aside and reserving to a later chapter the story of the developments in Ireland, in regard to which Harcourt was playing a conspicuous part, I propose in this chapter to bring together the outstanding features and incidents of his administration of the Home Office. It was not, as we have seen, the task which he would have chosen, but it was congenial enough to his tastes and sympathies. It touched life at many points, and it engaged him both as a lawyer interested in the problems of justice and social order, and as a man of generous impulses endowed with a large appetite for the everyday affairs of the world. He himself described the abundance and variety of his duties when, in his speech at Glasgow (October 26, 1881), in acknowledging the freedom of the City, he said:

. . . There is the criminal business of the whole country; all the magistrates, all the judges, for England and Scotland; all the judicial business. Then, sir, there is naturalization. Then there is the class of business—which is, at times, more extensive than one could desire—called disturbances. Then there is a very peculiar class of business called burials. And there is vivisection, and the recorders and the magistrates, and the lunatics, and the asylums,

and the habitual drunkards, and the factories, and the mines, and the chimney-sweepers, and hackney cabs, and the police, and explosives, and small birds, and tithes, and enclosures, and municipal corporations, and metropolitan buildings, and artisans' dwellings. And at the end of it there is the business of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. And when you have spent a morning on light work of that kind there is about ten hours sitting in the House of Commons, and after that it is supposed that I am desirous of engrossing a larger share of business than that which I have at present. . . .

Of the spirit in which Harcourt, during five years, administered this great office, no one is more competent to speak than Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise, who began his official career as Harcourt's private secretary at the Home Office. At the commemoration of the completion of twenty-five years' service as Chairman of the Prison Commission, Sir Evelyn said he owed much to the encouragement and training of Harcourt. "Sir William," he said, "was a great man and my constant friend—a man who was terrifying to me, yet one of the most affectionate men I ever met. I used to take dictation of Sir William's letters given at a great pace and full of literary and other allusions. Once I could not follow one of his allusions, and turning to me he said, 'You are the most ignorant boy I ever met.'

"I had just come down from Oxford where I had done rather well," said Sir Evelyn to me in recalling the incident, "and I might have felt aggrieved. But I knew it was one of his pleasant ironies. His anger had much of the quality of summer lightning. It was fierce, but did not last long or do much damage. It was my first business in the morning to call on him at 7, Grafton Street to take letters and receive instructions. He used to come down to me in his dressing-gown, very large, very red and generally very angry with some intolerable person or some impossible demand. But having exploded his anger, the sun came out, and his natural gaiety of temper would revive. He was quick to quarrel, but quick to forgive, and to take the blame to himself. My predecessor in the Chairmanship of the Prison Commission, Sir Edmund Du Cane, had as hot

a temper as Sir William himself, and the two clashed with a good deal of violence. On one occasion Sir William ordered him out of his room, but he was not long in following him, with outstretched hand, and a delightfully boyish confession that he was a fool not to control his temper.

"He was a man of singularly generous heart, and the Home Office was never administered by any one who had more sympathy with the prisoner and the captive. He was a great lawyer, but he put humanity above the law, and he was always thundering against judges and magistrates who were harsh or inconsiderate. He was especially angry at the long periods prisoners were often kept in prison before being put on trial, and even after he went out of office he continued his efforts in and out of Parliament to put a stop to this abuse. In 1891 he got from the Home Office a promise to make a return of the periods that untried prisoners had been kept waiting for trial. 'Something must be done,' he wrote to me, 'to shame H.M.'s judges into doing a fair day's work for a more than fair day's wage.' And in the case of two boys whose treatment had aroused his indignation, he wrote to me (March 5, 1891):

> . . . I shall be glad to know that these youths are not subjected to three months' imprisonment before trial for an offence for which they should not get more than a month. Pope says, 'Wretches hang that jurymen may dine,' but here people are detained months in prison (some of them innocent) in order that judges—the laziest of the human race—may be saved a little trouble. It is a very retrograde sort of legislation that prefers the convenience of judges to the liberty of the subject.

"That was the spirit of his administration. He was impatient with the cold processes of officialism. I remember once a prisoner had been wrongfully convicted. A demand was made on the Treasury for some trifle of compensation to the aggrieved man—a gift of £10 or so. The Treasury refused, and Sir William, very red and very angry, promptly sent the man the sum out of his own pocket. He could not tolerate injustice.

"And he was just as intolerant of official laziness. The

Home Office messengers were certainly trying people in those days, and they were a constant source of annoyance to Sir William. On one occasion he had despatched by one of them an 'immediate' box of documents to the Lord Chancellor. It was not delivered until next day, and this is a passage from a letter to the Lord Chancellor which Sir William thereupon dictated to me:

> . . . Though I believe there are about 200 public-houses between Grafton Street and the House of Lords, four-and-twenty hours is more than enough to have devoted to them on one occasion. I have remonstrated on this subject over and over again, but can get no support in endeavouring to re-establish discipline in the Office. . . . It is like firing cannon balls into feather beds.

"He was extraordinarily punctilious about the dignities and courtesies of official intercourse. It was before the days of the cold, impersonal departmental note. On one occasion, after he went out of office, he wrote to his successor on some public question, and received in return an official acknowledgment. He returned the note to me with the following letter:

> I return the enclosed letter without reading it. I am sorry to observe that the good manners of the Home Office have degenerated since I knew it. I certainly was not in the habit of answering letters addressed to me by my predecessors in office through an under-secretary; nor did they do so. I daresay I may be considered old-fashioned in these matters, but the observance of traditional courtesies is not a bad thing even in a Secretary of State. At all events I don't wish to make myself a party to what the French would call a *mal élevé* innovation. So please note this letter is 'returned from the dead letter office.'

"He would have no part in the periodical hue and cry against Civil Service extravagance. Writing to me in reference to Lord Randolph Churchill's 'economy' cry against the Civil Service, he said:

> All this economy talk is for 'the gallery' and not real business. The real truth is that there has been much growth of work and little growth of expenditure in the Civil Service of late years. If anything is to be really done it must be by big reduction of Army and Navy, and that only a Tory Government can attempt.

"I think his attitude of mind was that of the oligarch

rather than the democrat. He had a passion for justice and a genuine belief in liberty, but he had the tradition of the governing class. He wanted it to be an efficient governing class, and he devoted much of his enormous energies to an unceasing correspondence with the inner circle spirits in every phase of public affairs. He had great affection for and great pride in his subordinates, and no promotion ever came to me without bringing a generous letter of congratulation from him, with a jocular reminder that he 'invented' me for the Home Office. He was a great man, with a formidable outside, but a big heart and a powerful understanding."

In his work at the Home Office, Harcourt had as Under Secretary Peel (afterwards Speaker of the House), but in December 1880, owing to the state of his health, Peel resigned, and Granville urged the appointment of the Earl of Fife. "I think Granville is somewhat too greedy for his peers," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone. He would not have Fife on any terms. He had tried him in the Office and done all he could to interest him with the work, but he never came near the place. He believed in a governing class, but it must be competent and must work. He would have no *roi fainéant*. He urged Gladstone to consent to the appointment of Leonard Courtney (Lord Courtney). "I know him well," he said, "and think highly of his powers. He is a man capable of being very useful in office and very much the reverse out of office. I know he is generally considered not *facile à vivre*, but I have always got on well with him personally." Gladstone agreed, and Courtney became Harcourt's chief lieutenant, on the condition that "I may be at liberty to walk out if the Transvaal question is raised." At this time Harcourt was urging Huxley to take the Chief Inspectorship of Fisheries, vacant by the death of Frank Buckland. "I have always thought that science has not its fair share in the Civil Service," he wrote, and Gladstone agreed. After much pressure Huxley took the post. One of Harcourt's tasks at the Home Office was the reorganization of the Metropolitan Police. In a long memorandum to Gladstone

(December 3, 1880) he urged the need of carrying through the reforms recommended by the departmental committee, and expressed his own view that the staff at Scotland Yard was susceptible of material consolidation and reduction. He entered into his scheme with great minuteness, and as he showed a net saving of £3,650 a year as the result of a more efficient system he was justified in his remark that "I hope that . . . you will not regard this as a bad financial transaction."

II

Among the multitudinous tasks that fell to him at the Home Office, none gave Harcourt so much anxiety as the treatment of prisoners and the revision of sentences. John Bright has described him as the most humane Home Secretary he ever encountered. It was this aspect of his administration which was largely the subject of his correspondence with the Queen, to whom he was responsible in the exercise of clemency, and who was disturbed at what she felt was his undue tenderness to offenders, and was only pacified on receiving the most exhaustive reports.

Harcourt was especially preoccupied with the unsatisfactory administration of justice in the case of juvenile offenders, which had already begun to offend the public conscience, although the process of remedying it is still incomplete. He was strongly impressed with the harmful effects of sending young children to prison, which he thought was more likely to make them into criminals than to reform them. But the magistrates were faced with the difficulty of dealing with young hooligans, in the absence of proper agencies to which their reform could be entrusted, and they were more than restive under the recommendations of the Home Secretary. In a circular sent to the metropolitan police magistrates he recommended the birch in preference to committal to prison in certain cases, and he also addressed letters to other districts urging his point of view.

In a letter (September 1880) to the Mayor of Manchester, who had submitted to him a scheme for obviating some of

the worst hardships of the system, he pointed out that in a single year 6,000 children between the ages of twelve and sixteen, and 720 under the age of twelve, were sent to prison. In a long letter to the Queen, who had not approved of some remissions of sentences, he said :

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

STUDLEY ROYAL, *September* 16, 1880.—Many of these cases were for trifling offences, as, for instance, a boy of nine years old for throwing stones, several boys of eleven and twelve years for damaging grass by running about in the fields ; a girl of thirteen for being drunk ; several boys of twelve and thirteen for bathing in a canal, and similarly for playing at pitch and toss ; a boy of nine for stealing scent ; a boy of thirteen for threatening a woman, three boys of eleven for breaking windows ; a boy of ten for wilfully damaging timber. This morning a case is reported of a boy of ten years old sentenced to fourteen days' hard labour or a fine of £1 15*s.* 3*d.* for " unlawfully throwing down a boarded fence," and the Governor of Prisons reports this child as a small delicate boy who can neither read nor write. . . .

Sir William humbly begs leave to represent to Your Majesty that protracted imprisonment in such cases has an injurious effect both upon the physical and moral nature of children of tender years. The child who has been guilty only of some mischievous or thoughtless prank which does not partake of the real character of crime finds himself committed with adult criminals guilty of heinous offences to the common gaol. After a week or a fortnight's imprisonment he comes out of prison tainted in character amongst his former companions, with a mark of opprobrium set upon him, and he soon lapses into the criminal class with whom he has been identified. That this sort of punishment has not a reformatory but a degrading effect is painfully evident from many of the cases reported. Most of them are first convictions, but in those where there have been previous imprisonments the child was over and over again brought up on fresh charges generally exhibiting a progressive advance in criminal character. . . .

The Queen thereupon sent her approval. " H.M. was really interested in all you said about the youthful criminals," wrote Sir Henry Ponsonby in a private letter to Harcourt from Balmoral. " She would like to whip them, but it seems that that cannot be done. What she objected to was not being forewarned of these numerous remissions." Incidentally Ponsonby advised Harcourt to put his letter in a sealed envelope to " The Queen." " She didn't say

anything," he said significantly, "but she generally likes this best, as she can show me your letter or not as she thinks best."

But Harcourt had other difficulties. The harsher type of magistrate was outraged by this display of leniency, and the Home Secretary became the target of widespread attack in the Press. "Your speech and Derby's," Harcourt wrote to Lord Houghton from Oban (October 9), "have come just in the nick of time to save me from the roaring J.P.'s who are about to devour me." This had reference to a meeting on the subject of the punishment of children, at the Manchester Town Hall, when Lord Derby and Lord Houghton both spoke in support of the Home Secretary. Harcourt's activity had an immediate effect on the magistrates. He was able to say at Birmingham on November 6 that since he had received daily reports of the committal of children they had fallen from eighty and ninety in a week to ten. He mentioned that in one case a child of seven had been sent to prison. Unfortunately the legislation which Harcourt had in mind was prevented owing to the increasing degree in which Ireland occupied the time of Parliament. But the administrative activity had a permanent effect upon the magisterial mind, and Lord Norton was able to write to Harcourt that his "bold and potent action" had emptied the Stafford Gaol of children. In 1882 Harcourt drafted a Bill giving discretion to magistrates to substitute whipping for imprisonment in the case of indictable offences; requiring the parent in certain cases to pay fines and to be responsible for the child's behaviour, and doing away with the necessity of preliminary imprisonment before sending a child to the reformatory.

The occupant of the condemned cell was no less disquieting a responsibility to Harcourt than the juvenile offender. In 1878 he had declared in the House of Commons his unofficial view in favour of the abolition of the death penalty. He did not believe in the deterrent argument that had been used in the past to support the hanging of men convicted of the theft of 5s. If it did not deter them from sheep-

stealing why should it deter them from murder, which was generally done under the influence of violent passion. In office he developed his case in a paper addressed to the Cabinet. He recognized that public opinion was not ripe for abolition, but he desired to see a better discrimination established by law, and later (January 1882) he submitted a Bill to the Cabinet proposing that two "degrees" of murder should be recognized. For the first "degree" the jury must expressly find the "intent to kill"; for this first degree the death penalty would still be exacted, but for the second, where "intent" was not expressly recognized, penal servitude for life or for a shorter period would be the scheduled punishment. But like so many other good legislative intentions the project was suffocated by more clamant affairs.

Meanwhile, in the treatment of adult prisoners as in the case of juveniles, the exercise of the prerogative of mercy under the administration of Harcourt was giving concern in high quarters. "The Queen is afraid from the number of remissions sent her," writes Ponsonby to Harcourt from Balmoral (November 17, 1880), "that you are treating offenders with too great leniency, and commanded me to call your attention to this." Her Majesty demanded a return of the number of remissions signed by her in the last six months and in the previous six months. It was apparent that she intended to judge Harcourt's action by that of his predecessor Cross.

"The notion that I am letting fellows out of prison right and left out of pure *gaieté de cœur* is quite unfounded," wrote Harcourt to Ponsonby. "There was not one of these cases in which I could have acted otherwise if I had wished." The Queen had specially drawn attention to the discharge of two militiamen in prison for desertion. Harcourt triumphantly pointed out to Ponsonby that one had been released at the instance of the Secretary of War because it had been found that he ought not to have been imprisoned at all, and the other had been inadvertently convicted of desertion when he was actually in custody in gaol. "What

would have happened," he asked Ponsonby, "if she had declined to sign the release of two militiamen declared by the War Office and the judges to be innocent and to be wrongfully imprisoned?" To the Queen he wrote at great length (November 20) pointing out that, except in the case of children, he had not departed from the practice of his predecessors. Seven of the sixteen cases had been remitted on medical certificates that the life of the prisoner was in danger, and he was confident that Her Majesty would not desire that a moderate punishment should be "turned into a capital sentence." In five other cases in which prisoners had been released an illegal sentence had been passed by inadvertence in excess of the powers of the judges. In two cases the judges themselves had recommended the revision of sentences. The remaining two cases were the commutation of the capital sentences on women for the murder of their illegitimate children. "No woman has for many years been hanged under these circumstances. Sir William humbly submits to Your Majesty that he would not have been justified in advising Your Majesty to revive in their cases a practice long disused which would greatly have shocked the sentiments of the community." But he had given instructions that in future in every case of remission a memorandum of the facts should be sent to the Queen.

But still the Queen was disturbed. "H.M. remarks—But why are there more remissions now than formerly?" wrote Ponsonby to Harcourt, who promptly replied with the actual figures showing that he had remitted eighty-three sentences on adults in seven months against his predecessor's eighty-two in five months.

This satisfied the Queen that the Home Secretary could be trusted not to be too lenient; but her doubts returned later. She was especially suspicious where men guilty of wife murder were reprieved. "Men are lenient to criminals who murder their wives," she said to Ponsonby, and in the case of John Richmond, whose sentence had been commuted by Harcourt, something like a storm arose between the Queen and her Minister. Richmond had killed his wife,

but not intentionally. He was sentenced to be hanged and the sentence was commuted to penal servitude. There were the customary protests, and Harcourt in a letter to Ponsonby objected to the Queen's asking why Richmond was pardoned, and said he must resign if she objected to commutation. Ponsonby claimed that the Queen had a right to inquire into the reasons, not in order to reject his advice, but to make her own opinions known to him and in order to receive further explanation. "Without insisting on this man being hanged, the Queen may surely ask for your observations." Harcourt cooled down, the commutation was duly signed, and Ponsonby writes, "I have according to your directions destroyed your letter"—the letter in which Harcourt had threatened resignation.

III

There was another type of crime which led to a certain collision between the Queen and Harcourt. It was that most unhappy of all forms of murder, infanticide. Harcourt in June 1884 commuted the sentence of death passed on Mary Wilcox for the murder of her illegitimate child, and the Queen wrote from Balmoral (June 20) that she could not "help observing that this is the third or fourth case in which conviction for murder has been commuted," and requesting explanation. Harcourt replied (June 23) that even in days when the law was more cruel, mercy was frequently extended by the Crown in such cases "in the manner so beautifully recounted by Sir W. Scott in the *Heart of Midlothian*." He proceeded:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

. . . Sir William encloses the printed account of the trial from which Your Majesty will learn that all the circumstances of pity which surround these painful cases were present in this instance. The girl was very young; her seducer had gone abroad; her mother had turned her out of doors; she loved her child; out of her hard earnings of seven shillings a week she gave three shillings for the support of the child; the child as one witness says was "better clad than its mother," and as another states "in fact except the

bread and water that she ate and drank she gave all her money for her child."

To have allowed a girl to be hanged under these circumstances would have been a thing unheard of in modern times, and would have produced a revulsion of public sentiment which would have been enlisted on the side of the offender and not against the offence. As it is she will undergo a terrible punishment which her crime will have well deserved. The jury strongly recommended the prisoner to mercy. This is a strong indication of public sentiment which it is not wise to disregard. If juries found that their recommendations were neglected, they would take the matter into their own hands (as they did in former days), and refuse to convict, in which case the offender would go free. . . .

One thing which makes Sir William look at these cases with peculiar care and caution is the sad conclusion at which he has arrived after some years of experience at the Home Office, viz., that with all the care to guard against such a result, erroneous sentences are too often passed on innocent persons. So many examples of this misfortune have come under his notice in ordinary cases that he is bound to be specially careful in the execution of sentences when there can be no remedy in case of error. Only a few weeks ago on the careful study of the case of two men sentenced to death, Sir William, on a careful consideration, conceived that there was so much doubt about the case that he respited the prisoners for a week in order to enable an inquiry to be held. The result of the inquiry was to prove the innocence of one of the prisoners on the confession of the other man sentenced with him. Your Majesty will sympathize in the feeling of relief which Sir William felt in having been the means of rescuing an innocent man from a terrible and undeserved fate. . . .

He concluded a long dissertation on the true exercise of the prerogative with the remark that "the principle on which he endeavours to act is that all the world should feel that no man is spared who ought to be hanged, and no man is hanged who ought to have been spared."

The Queen replied (June 26) that she had read the letter with pain, "as it gives her the impression that Sir William Harcourt thinks *she* wishes to be harsh and cruel and to insist on the extreme penalty of the law being carried out in cases which above all commend themselves to mercy—especially when poor young creatures have been in despair driven to destroy newly-born infants." She had herself urged mercy in such cases. But she did not know this was

one of those cases—the child being two years old—nor was it about this case she meant to make the observation :

. . . It was more generally with regard to several convictions for murders of wives, etc., which had struck her as very bad cases, and the commutation for which she hardly could understand. At the same time the bare thought of any innocent prisoner being executed is too horrible to contemplate. Still murder (excepting of late in Austria and Hungary) is more frequent within the Queen's Empire (she ought to say Kingdom as she means in Great Britain and Ireland) than in other countries.

Harcourt replied (June 28) expressing his deepest regret that anything he had written had caused the Queen pain, or could convey an impression " so totally the reverse of his true sentiments. No one," he continued, " has had better means of knowing and of most thankfully acknowledging Your Majesty's tender kindness and constant sympathy for all your subjects, and particularly the miserable and the erring." With this prelude he proceeds to state the principles on which he tenders advice in these painful cases to Her Majesty. He points to the decline in serious crime as evidence that the penal code is neither too severe nor too lax, and describes the different categories of murder and the cases in which in all other countries " the sentence of death is not only not executed, but not pronounced." In England this discrimination does not exist :

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

. . . But there are cases in which public sentiment would not support the execution of the extreme sentence. As for example in two recent cases (to which possibly Your Majesty may refer) a drunken husband has a brawl with his wife also drunk. In the course of the fight he throws an iron saucepan at her head and bruises her. She is in a bad state of health and dies a month after of erysipelas. The blow was not intended to kill, nor indeed but for her state of health calculated to destroy life. But it is murder by law, and the capital sentence is properly passed, but every one would be shocked at the hanging of a man who had no intention of killing his wife, and both before and after the act had showed himself sincerely attached to her.

Two years ago Sir William discussed at great length with the Chancellor and the Judges a Bill to classify murders which would, as abroad, prevent the capital sentence being inflicted except

when the Jury found there was an *intention to kill*. But on mature consideration Sir William found that there was so much difficulty in obtaining an accurate definition, and so much danger attending an alteration in the law a so serious matter that he thought it more prudent to abandon the attempt, and leave the principle to be applied by the judgment of the Secretary of State in each particular case as it now is. Sir William feels most deeply the responsibility of this anxious duty and is most desirous that Your Majesty should be completely satisfied as to the manner in which it is discharged. Your Majesty will easily believe that sometimes it has caused him sleepness nights in the anxiety to arrive at a right conclusion. . . .

Sir William asks leave to express to Your Majesty the pleasure it was to him to see in the corridor at Windsor your Majesty's little grandchildren round one of whom especially gather such sad and tender recollections. He trusts that the Duchess of Albany is in good health and is able to bear with fortitude her irreparable loss. [The Duke of Albany had just died.]

As Sir William gathers from Your Majesty's letter that Your Majesty does not disapprove of the commutation in the case of the poor girl Mary Wilcox, he ventures again to submit the paper of commutation for Your Majesty's signature.

The Queen thereupon signed the conditional pardon, with warm thanks for Harcourt's "clear explanation of the course pursued in this most painful part of his responsible duties." She added:

. . . The Queen is glad he saw her dear little Grandchildren, as she knows the interest he takes in them, and the sight of these poor little fatherless bairns wrings her heart to look at! Her poor daughter-in-law is well, and the most wonderfully resigned and uncomplaining person the Queen ever saw.

As a pendant to this phase of the relations between the Queen and the Home Secretary, the following note from Ponsonby to Harcourt is suggestive:

WINDSOR CASTLE, *July* 5, 1883.—I am commanded by the Queen to ask if men who are cruel to dogs as mentioned by "Ponto" cannot be more severely punished than by a fine of £2.

Her sympathy with the animal world was acute, and in a letter to Harcourt she said:

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

WINDSOR CASTLE, *November* 25, 1881.— . . There is, however,

another subject on which the Queen feels *most* strongly, and that is this horrible, brutalizing, *unchristian-like Vivisection*.

That poor dumb animals should be kept alive as described in this trial is *revolting* and *horrible*. This *must* be stopped. Monkeys and dogs—two of the most intelligent amongst these poor animals who cannot complain—dogs, "man's best friend," possessed of more than instinct, to be treated in this fearful way is *awful*. She directs Sir Wm. Harcourt's attention *most strongly to it*.

It must really not be permitted. It is a disgrace to a civilized country.

Harcourt replied that he had already arranged an interview with Sir James Paget and Sir William Gull for the purpose of discussing the question of vivisection, and would later submit some observations on the subject.

He had already informed the Queen that instructions had been given for the rigorous enforcement of the existing law with regard to vivisection and that the limit set to the practice should be restricted rather than extended. Ponsonby was also asked by the Queen (June 20, 1880) to say that she "takes the greatest interest in the protection of wild birds, and trusts therefore that the Bill, which I understand is to be brought into the House to-morrow, will receive support." Harcourt replied that he believed it would be a useful measure and a proper correction for the cruelties now so often practised and the destruction of rare and beautiful species by unauthorized persons. "The object of the Bill," he said, "is to prevent vagrant bird-catchers from coming on to the land and killing and catching birds without the leave of the owners or occupiers."

IV

But there was another aspect of Harcourt's duties as the guardian of the peace and of justice that brought him into more anxious relationship with the Queen. He was largely responsible for her safety and for the security of her movements. It was the time when the words "dynamitards" and "nihilists" came into the popular currency and when crowned heads lay on unusually unquiet pillows. The murder of the Emperor Alexander II of Russia by the

explosion of a bomb on March 13, 1881, aroused widespread alarm in the courts of Europe, and a demand arose from various continental quarters for legislation against aliens in Great Britain, which was alleged to be a harbourage for conspirators. Harcourt had at the time of the Orsini case been an energetic upholder of the right of asylum, and could hardly be expected to reverse his convictions. However, his indignation was thoroughly aroused by a scandalous article praising the assassination of the Tsar, which appeared in the *Freiheit*, a German paper printed in London. The Queen was very anxious for the prosecution of the offender, a man named Most. Harcourt was careful to explain in the House of Commons (March 31, 1881) that, in prosecuting, the Government were not acting at the instigation of foreign Powers. Most's language, which he read in the House, he justly characterized as of "a revolting and bestial ferocity," constituting a gross domestic crime and a breach of public morality. There was much difference of opinion as to the wisdom of prosecution, and *The Times* argued powerfully against action. Harcourt, however, took the contrary view. "I am myself in favour of prosecution," he wrote (March 25) to Granville, and the next day he induced the Cabinet to agree with him. The Queen was delighted. "The article is an abominable one, and it would have been a scandal if it had been left unnoticed," wrote Ponsonby, and a few days later (April 7) he told Harcourt that the Queen was most anxious to know when the trial would come on and whether papers had been found at Most's house which would "help the police in following up the traces of any nihilistic plot." Three days later the Queen was inquiring again through Ponsonby as to the prospects of the trial, and whether there was any difference in law between conspiring the death of a foreign subject, which of course was a crime, and conspiring the death of the ruler of a foreign State? "It has been said that the latter being an incident of a political nature is thereby protected." "The Queen," wrote Ponsonby (May 26), "cannot understand a recommendation to mercy. She hopes no weak leniency will be shown."

Harcourt pointed out that the conviction was of more importance than the punishment, and the Queen replied (June 1) agreeing, but added, "Still the Queen trusts this (the punishment) will be sufficient to mark what she must consider a grave crime." Most was duly tried, convicted and sentenced to sixteen months' hard labour.

The Queen's concern was not unfounded, for early in 1882 an attempt on her own life was made by Roderick Maclean at Windsor. "The carriage was shut," wrote Ponsonby to Harcourt (March 2, 1882) in describing the crime, "as the Queen drove out of the station with Princess Beatrice and the Duchess of Roxburghe, so the man could not have seen the Queen. There was some cheering, chiefly, I think, from some Eton boys, and in the midst of it we heard the shot. He had a new revolver, five chambers—two were loaded when I saw it. He had fourteen cartridges on him and a letter in pencil, that he seems to have written in the station, which accuses some one of not paying him properly and driving him to commit this crime." The incident created much sensation, and there were anxious messages to Harcourt. Ponsonby wrote:

WINDSOR CASTLE, *March* 9.— . . . The Queen does not want severity of punishment, but that the would-be assassin should be taken care of. Imprisonment without hard labour for life or any punishment that would prevent a recurrence of the offence. I send you a memorandum by the Prince Consort written after Francis's crime.

The memorandum stated certain premisses in regard to the protection of the Sovereign, and arrived at the conclusion that as the law stood it did not afford adequate security.

Later in the day came another message from Windsor to Harcourt from Ponsonby, asking whether he knew or could ascertain what had become of the previous would-be regicides.

Before the trial came on the Queen left for Mentone, first sending to Harcourt (March 12) a message to the nation expressing her gratitude for the "outburst of enthusiastic loyalty, affection and devotion which the painful event has

called forth from all classes and from all parts of her vast Empire—as well as from the Sovereigns and People of other nations." Harcourt in a letter to Ponsonby pointed out that "loyalty" and "devotion" on the part of sovereigns and people of other nations might be misunderstood, and suggested another form of words for publication. In a personal letter to Harcourt, the Queen said:

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

CHERBOURG, On Board the *Victoria and Albert*, *March* 14, 1882.—The Queen has to thank Sir Wm. Harcourt for a very kind letter received this morning before leaving Windsor. She is glad to see that her letter (which to *her* feeling did but *feebly* express what she felt) is appreciated. Indeed it is *impossible* to say *how* much touched and gratified she is by the demonstrations of loyalty, devotion and affection shown her on this painful occasion. *Generally*, people are appreciated *only* after their death—as alas! within her own experience, has often been the case. But it has fallen to *her* lot to be *most kindly* and lovingly spoken of and appreciated in her *lifetime*. . . .

The Queen is very glad to know from Mr. Gladstone to-day the proposed arrangement for Maclean's trial. How soon will that take place?

But Harcourt's anxieties did not end with the Queen's holiday. Ponsonby wrote to him from Mentone (March 20) about three Irishmen supposed to be coming from Paris, who were suspected of he knew not what. The Prefect of the Police and the detectives were all in a state of commotion, and John Brown, "who always goes with the Queen when driving," had told her of the alarm, and consequently made her nervous. There was a corrective however. "Policeman Greenham from Scotland Yard says he thinks it is a hoax. He has said this loudly so that it might reach H.M.'s ears (as it has), and this is a good thing, for it has relieved her—and I am also inclined to agree with him." In his reply to the Queen's letter, Harcourt (March 26) set himself to calm her apprehensions, told her that he had at once reinforced the detective police at Windsor and other places where she might reside, and proceeded:

. . . As Your Majesty has most truly and touchingly said it has been Your Majesty's lot to be universally beloved in your life-

time, a fortune which in most cases is reserved for the dead. Sir William half remembers a line in Schiller's *Maria Stuart*, in which that ill-starred Queen is made to say, "I have been much hated, but I have been much beloved." But in a reign extended beyond the term of that of the great Elizabeth, Your Majesty has had experience only of the better fortune of a Queen who has always lived in the love of all her subjects.

The Queen was still nervous and thought that a Scotland Yard detective should be at Windsor even when she was not there. When Maclean, tried at Reading by the Lord Chief Justice, was declared mad and condemned to permanent restraint, Ponsonby wrote to Harcourt (April 19), "The Queen thinks the verdict an extraordinary one, and that it will leave her no security for the future if any man who chooses to shoot at her is thereby proclaimed to be mad." She was now back at Windsor, and Harcourt's letter-bag was heavy with disquiets from thence, and instructions about precautions in regard to her movements. Thus Ponsonby writes (June 22) to him of mysterious digging going on in the garden of an unoccupied house. However, it was a groundless scare, for next day Ponsonby informs Harcourt that "the digging observed was connected with a fountain" which the innocent suspect was placing in his garden. These alarms were not without a comedy aspect. Occasionally Harcourt was caught between two fires, from Windsor and Sandringham. A man named Bradshaw had written threatening the life of the Prince of Wales if he did not receive £10. He had the misfortune to come before Justice Hawkins, with the fate common to those who had that experience. On hearing the sentence—ten years' imprisonment—the Prince of Wales wrote to Harcourt asking him to secure the mitigation of the sentence:

The Prince of Wales to Harcourt.

SANDRINGHAM, *Nov.* 26, 1882.— . . . Sir Henry Hawkins has sentenced this unfortunate man to ten years' penal servitude, and I cannot help thinking that the latter was suffering from derangement of the mind when he threatened my life if £10 was not sent to him. No doubt in these days it is necessary to inflict punishment on those who write threatening letters, but at the same time I should

be very glad if it were possible to lessen, with the concurrence of Sir Henry Hawkins, the sentence passed on Bradshaw.

News of this request reached Windsor, and accordingly two days later Harcourt received a message from Ponsonby that "Her Majesty cannot help remarking that she fears anything that would weaken the sentence awarded by the judge would have a bad effect." Harcourt was equal to the emergency. He wrote to Ponsonby (November 29):

. . . I had a note from the Prince of Wales asking me to remit the sentence of the letter-writer. This I have respectfully declined to do, and told him if it is to be done *it must be by my successor!* May he soon appear for the sake of the culprit—and *of mine*. Please tell the Queen this.

V

Apart from the exercise of the prerogative of mercy and questions affecting the Queen's safety, Harcourt was in close intercourse with Her Majesty on many subjects. He prepared her speech for the opening of the new Law Courts, was consulted by her on such subjects as her attitude to the Salvation Army, and whether she should sign the diplomas of the Old Water Colour Society, was kept busy with inquiries about dynamitards and secret societies, had his attention called to the horror of the *Morning Post* at the announcement that a great Socialist Congress was to be held in London, and was inundated with inquiries about this, that and the other, the state of Ireland, public calamities and personal affairs. The spirit of the correspondence is always cordial, and as the years went on the Queen's confidence in her minister obliterated her earlier doubts. She was now growing old and feeling the weight of years and anxieties, and her letters contain many allusions to her weariness. Replying to a birthday greeting from Harcourt, she says:

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

WINDSOR CASTLE, *May* 24, 1883.— . . . She is truly sensible of and grateful for the loyalty of her people, and as long as life lasts and she has the strength to go on, she will work. But her powers have been very severely taxed and losses have fallen upon her which

have made life again very sad and trying and difficult, and she must ask that not too much be expected of her or—the cord will snap. The work is pressing, too heavy, too severe, and age advances and helps are withdrawn—which makes everything very difficult.

And a month later, referring to her lameness, she says in reply to Harcourt's inquiries:

WINDSOR CASTLE, *June* 24, 1883.— . . . Her leg is improving tho' not rapidly, and she can just walk downstairs with help. But otherwise she cannot give a better report—her spirits remain deeply depressed, and this summer time, when she is so much out of doors, forces her sad loss more painfully than ever upon her, and she feels weak and tired. But it makes no difference in her anxiety to do her work, and her ability to do so as much as is possible. . . .

As minister in attendance at intervals at Balmoral, Harcourt was a welcome figure, though he occasionally caused concern by such departures from decorum as appearing in a grey frock-coat when black was the accustomed wear. And his enormous consumption of tobacco was obviously a matter of comment. Ponsonby's letters to him bear witness to the strong odour of cigars that he left behind in his rooms. Thus, when Lord Spencer succeeds Harcourt as minister in attendance, Ponsonby writes to the latter:

. . . Spencer arrived radiant and with the glow of health upon his cheek. But he is rapidly growing pallider and sallower in consequence of a mysterious perfume in his room. But he intimated to me that the mystery was explained in a confidential despatch which he received on arrival. . . .

After Harcourt left the Home Office, the Queen looked back with regret, in the light of what she supposed to be Childers's indifference to dangerous people like Socialists and "foreign political intriguers," to Harcourt's "careful watch on these men," and how regularly he told her of the measures taken for protecting every one against evil deeds. "H.M. says it is a pity you did not go back to the H.O.," wrote Ponsonby. "She don't always admire your political views, but you did your work very well there."

Although John Bright's description of Harcourt as the

most humane Home Secretary he had encountered is justified by his general record, he had occasional aberrations. The famous case of the *Mignonette* was the most conspicuous example. Sentence of death had been passed on two men, Dudley and Stephens, shipwrecked sailors, who after drifting for twenty-four days had murdered a boy named Parker for cannibalistic purposes. Harcourt was for severity, but James and Herschell, the law officers, implored him to exercise mercy. The men had suffered; their act was the act of men who had ceased to be responsible; judge, jury, and public opinion were in sympathy with them. "If you announce a commutation to penal servitude for life or even to any other term," wrote James (December 5, 1884), "you will never be able to maintain such a decision and you will have to give way." Harcourt protested against yielding to popular sentiment. "It is exactly to withstand an erroneous and perverted sentiment on such matters," he wrote to the Attorney-General, "that we are placed in situations of very painful responsibility. . . . The judgment of the Court in this case pronounces that to slay an innocent and unoffending person to save one's own life is not a justification or excuse, and it is therefore upon moral and ethical grounds, not upon technical grounds, that the law repels the loose and dangerous ideas floating about in the vulgar mind that such acts are venial or indeed anything short of the highest crime known to the law." But in the end he gave way, and the men were "respited during Her Majesty's pleasure."

In closing this survey of Harcourt's administration at the Home Office reference may be made to his efforts in another direction which left their mark upon the administration of justice. He was a believer in short sentences, not on humane grounds so much as on practical grounds. In 1884 he addressed an official letter to the Lord Chancellor showing the rapid and solid diminution of crime indicated in the statistics of the Home Office. He pressed for a sensible mitigation of punishment by materially shortening the terms of imprisonment imposed in ordinary cases. His

experience was that sentences varied extremely in their magnitude without such difference in the circumstances as should account for the diversity. He hoped that by consultation with the Judges the Lord Chancellor might be able to introduce more harmony and uniformity in the sentences passed. He agreed with the opinion of Sir E. Du Cane, the responsible officer at the Home Office for prison administration, that the deterring and reformatory effect of imprisonment would in general be as well and even more effectually accomplished if the average length of sentences were materially shortened.

Harcourt's general attitude to the social life and pleasures of the people was essentially human, and I print in the Appendix to this volume a letter to a correspondent on itinerant shows, in which his point of view is stated with the kindliness and humour characteristic of the man.

VI

It was in the summer of 1881, when Courtney had gone to the Colonial Office, that Harcourt welcomed at the Home Office a new colleague with whom his own career was destined some years later to provide a political drama that occupied the centre of the stage at Westminster. Lord Rosebery was then a young man of brilliant promise, unusual gifts of speech, a pretty wit, excellent brain, youthful enthusiasm and great wealth. He had come into prominence during the Midlothian campaign as the host and supporter of Gladstone, and had already aroused the interest and expectations of the Party. He and Harcourt had long been acquainted, and in the previous December they had had a conversation at Mentmore on the subject of Scottish business, then in the hands of the Home Office, with the Lord Advocate as the voice of the department. Lord Rosebery felt strongly that a lawyer was not a suitable person for the sole management of the Scottish business which was not mainly legal, and Harcourt shared his view so strongly that he wrote to Gladstone (December 6, 1880) urging the appointment of a Scottish Minister. He was himself

anxious from the party point of view that Lord Rosebery should have a place in the Ministry. Lord Rosebery's popularity in Scotland was an important asset of the Party, and Harcourt thought that some recognition of his claims was not only due to him but desirable from the point of view of the favourable effect it would have on Scottish opinion. Gladstone, however, pleaded the pressure of business as a reason for not taking action then. Somewhat later Lord Carlingford was appointed Lord Privy Seal, and on the following Good Friday Harcourt, after a visit to the Durdans at Epsom, wrote with what seems excessive candour to Gladstone :

Harcourt to Gladstone.

RICHMOND, *Good Friday.*— . . . I should like to have the opportunity of some talk with you on the subject of the owner of The Durdans whom I found in a very great state of disappointment and irritation at the recent appointment to the Privy Seal, which office he *says* he did not expect—though that I consider is not quite an accurate view of the matter—but because he seems to have expected confidences on the subject which he did not receive. However unreasonable this may appear I can assure you that the annoyance is very strong and the vexation very deep. I did my best to smooth him down, but only with partial success. One of the symptoms of provocation is that he wholly declines to be consulted on Scotch business, on which I was in the habit of taking his opinion, as he says "that he has now no relations of any kind with the Government," and I have had some difficulty in restraining him from making a public declaration in Scotland to that effect—pointing out to him that such a course would infallibly be attributed to pique and be more injurious to him than to the Government.

I am sure you will be able to administer an anodyne to his wounded spirit when you return to town—but it is wanted. . . .

Gladstone replying to Harcourt said he hoped it was a temporary emotion, and added that "the notion of a title to be consulted on the succession to a Cabinet office is absurd. . . . I believe Rosebery to have a very modest estimate of himself, and trust he has not fallen into so gross an error." Harcourt, who had in the meantime gone to Sandringham, replied (April 17) to a letter from

Granville, advising that nothing should be written to Lord Rosebery:

> . . . Later on I doubt not a word in season will tend to set matters straight. Time is a great soother. I think I had better *not* send on your letter.
>
> We find it very pleasant here. The hosts very gracious and easy. Everything in the deepest mourning (for the Emperor Alexander), but I don't think the spirits much depressed. The Princess gives a ghastly account of their having to go twice a day to kiss the Czar for a fortnight after his death. The spectacle most horrible. She for some reason augurs well of the prospects of the Great Throne, but I see *he* is by no means equally confident. . . .

A month later Lord Rosebery sent Harcourt an old family relic which he had the luck to pick up, a watch given by Charles II to John Evelyn, an ancestor of Harcourt's. Gladstone kept Harcourt's hint in view, and when Courtney was promoted wrote to Harcourt suggesting that Lord Rosebery should succeed him as Under-Secretary at the Home Office. "I think you know how sincerely I am anxious that Rosebery should join the Government for all reasons," replied Harcourt (July 27), "and particularly on the ground of my great personal regard for him." But he went on to point out that it was impossible to carry on the business of the Home Office without a Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Commons. The Home Secretary had never been without such assistance for forty years. However, the appointment was made, perhaps unhappily. Harcourt's objection was a sound one, and no doubt absence from the parliamentary side of the work made the office, not in itself very suitable for one of Lord Rosebery's gifts, all the more irksome to him. The arrangement did not work well, and we find Harcourt recurring to it a little later in connection with a tiresome incident in connection with John Maclaren, the Lord-Advocate. He had been a source of much irritation, and as a way out Harcourt had offered him a vacant judgeship. Maclaren, however, resisted, appealed to Gladstone and to Bright, who wrote to Gladstone on his behalf. Harcourt in a letter to Gladstone (August 5) said:

. . . Already I find the Department in confusion and despair at the loss of a House of Commons Under-Secretary. And if besides wanting that aid I am to have a Lord-Advocate on whose cordial co-operation I could not rely, and who had successfully appealed against me (as he said he should) I do not see how I could get on at all. . . .

Gladstone suggested that the pertinacious Lord-Advocate should be allowed to continue in his office for two or three months until the law term began, and on this compromise the matter was settled. But in the meantime Rosebery had informed Harcourt that he could not accept the Under-Secretaryship if his name was to be associated with the incident. It was not a promising opening to their official relationship.

VII

Harcourt's preoccupation with his departmental duties of course curtailed his general political activities in public, but in the Cabinet and in private his influence was brought to bear on a multitude of themes, as his correspondence abundantly shows. Fears and threats of resignation from various quarters soon became a commonplace. In January 1881, for example, there is a note to Harcourt from Dilke saying, "Chamberlain replies exactly what I expected—that he would do it if nothing else was possible, but would prefer that he and I should resign." It is not clear what this refers to in the midst of the gathering discontents, but I imagine it relates to the proposal to give a charter to the North Borneo Company, on which the Government was sharply divided, Harcourt, Chamberlain, Bright, Childers and Dilke being against the grant, and Kimberley, Selborne and Granville for it. But there were so many other crises about this time that the Dilke letter may refer to something else. Harcourt himself had passed his "resignation" phase, and though he often spoke in letters to his friends of the irritations of office, he generally played the part of peacemaker among his high-spirited colleagues. None of the extra-departmental duties he performed in 1881 was more delicate than his share in the famous conflict between

the Queen and Gladstone over the evacuation of Kandahar. The announcement of that policy formed a part of the Queen's speech, and it was Spencer's and Harcourt's duty to go to the Council at Osborne and submit the speech for the approval of the Queen. The story of that singular day of battle, with its comings and goings, its remonstrances from the Queen, and the polite but adamant replies of the Ministers, the telegram to Gladstone and the anxious wait for the reply, all ending in the final surrender of Her Majesty is told in the memorandum which Harcourt and Spencer addressed to Gladstone (Appendix I to this volume).

In another case in which Harcourt became involuntarily engaged there were sparks between the Queen and her Prime Minister. Harcourt was staying at Balmoral in October 1881 in the midst of the storm that arose over the appointment of Sir Garnet Wolseley as Adjutant-General. He was a firm believer in the Cardwell-Childers short-service system which the Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief, hated. The Duke also disliked Wolseley, and prevailed on the Queen to adopt his view. At Balmoral the Queen approached Harcourt for his "advice," which, writes Harcourt to Gladstone (October 23), "I was obliged respectfully to evade, pointing out that it was impossible for one Secretary of State to invade or intermeddle with the affairs of the department of a colleague." He could not however prevent the Queen giving her opinion, and he communicated that opinion to Gladstone. It seemed that the Duke had told the Queen he would resign if Wolseley was appointed. The Queen had thereupon telegraphed to Childers refusing to approve the appointment. "She is quite conscious," he writes to Gladstone on October 23, "that the Duke has put himself out of court by the ground he has taken up, and the reasons he has given for his objection to Sir Garnet's appointment. He has not chosen to state what is the fact, that there is strong personal antipathy between the men quite apart from differences of professional opinion. . . . The question as I understand it is really one of 'incompatibility,' which between husband

and wife is often regarded as a good ground of amiable separation. It seems almost idle to hope that the Duke and Sir Garnet can live conjugally together." Harcourt added:

> . . . I have not ventured myself to offer any suggestion, but I have endeavoured to lay before you the situation as it is. It is very like the dramatic position in the *Critic* when all the parties are at a deadlock each with his dagger at the other's throat, and how it is to be terminated is not obvious. I fear not by the formula, "In the Queen's name I bid you all drop your swords and daggers."
>
> The only thing I feel strongly is that the resignation of the Duke should if possible be averted. The Queen evidently looks to you to help her out of the scrape, of the gravity of which I think she is entirely aware. . . .

Gladstone did not approve of the Court approaching Ministers, and showed no disposition to yield. Replying to Harcourt, he said:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

> HAWARDEN CASTLE, *October* 25.— . . . The Childers-Wolseley-Cambridge imbroglio is indeed serious, and H.M. I fear will not mend it by multiplying channels of communication; but it is not unnatural that she should, by herself and her belongings, feel for a soft place in the heart of the successive Ministers who may appear at Balmoral. You have been I think very constitutional. I am surprised that the temperature should now be high, because so far as I know Childers has given time, leaving the "enemy" so to speak in full possession of the field for the moment. No doubt his resignation would be an awkward fact for us, but to him damning. I will send your letter to Childers, and probably more light may be thrown upon the matter when we meet in town. . . .

The conflict continued, and in a further letter to Gladstone Harcourt said that the claim at Balmoral was that under the Royal Warrant the person who was to submit appointments to the Queen was the Commander-in-Chief, subject only to the approval of the Secretary of State.

In the meantime Harcourt had delivered his speech at Glasgow (October 25), and visited Sir Wilfrid Lawson in Cumberland and Gladstone at Hawarden on his way to London. In his speech he had indulged in some plain speaking about Salisbury and Stafford Northcote. Writing to him Ponsonby said:

Lawson

Ponsonby to Harcourt.

BALMORAL, *November* 5.— . . . If you care to know the comment on your speeches, which were carefully studied, I may tell you that your references to Lord Salisbury were not so much remarked upon, but your observations on Sir Stafford were objected to. However, what was still more objected to was your going to stay with Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

These exceptions excepted, your visit here was much liked and your letter on departing well appreciated.

The Wolseley bother has come to a crisis. . . .

Harcourt's stay with Lawson occurred in connection with his visit on October 29 to Cockermouth to speak on juvenile offenders. It was about this time that he began to favour local option as the solution of the liquor question. He ignored the reference to his visit to Lawson in his reply to Ponsonby, but said:

Harcourt to Ponsonby.

HOME DEPARTMENT, *November* 8.—I fear I can hardly hope to give satisfaction *politically*, but if I suit *personally* it is as much as can be expected. As to the great Duke of Cambridge bear-fight I hope what the French call a *transaction* will still be arrived at. I saw Gladstone at Hawarden and Childers here this morning on the subject. I am not authorized to say anything, but I hope the direct personal difficulty may be removed and consequently the rupture arrested, but H.R.H. will have to learn for the future that the appointments do not rest with him, and I doubt if he will congratulate himself on the substituted names. . . . I never saw G. in better health and spirits than he was at Hawarden where we spent some pleasant days.

There was a pleasanter subject between Harcourt and Balmoral a little later. He wrote to Ponsonby that "today (December 6) I found an equestrian picture of H.M. by Landseer on the point of being sold to a Yankee to go to America. So I cut him out and kept it for the U.K." The picture was painted when the Queen was eighteen. She remembered the sittings she gave for it well, said Ponsonby, but it was left unfinished:

. . . . Her Majesty hopes you will not think she ever wore her hat as Landseer has represented it. He insisted on placing it so for artistic reasons, but much against her will.

Earlier in the year Harcourt had sent to the Prince of

Wales two water-colour drawings of George III out hunting, with a jocular suggestion that they might decorate the stables. His relations with the Prince were free from the heavy sense of decorum that marked his communications with the Queen. The two men had much in common, and healthy understanding and good feeling characterized their correspondence which, after the visit of Harcourt and his wife to Sandringham in April of this year, was not infrequent. For the rest, in spite of his heavy duties, he found time to cultivate his friendships and enjoy the pleasant things of life, especially those which centred in his family. Of his way of life we have a glimpse in a merry letter to Lord Lytton, with whom in spite of disagreements over India he still remained on cordial terms:

HOME DEPARTMENT, *January* 7, 1881.—You don't know how happy your letter makes me. By no means come to a pompous dinner on Saturday. I am obliged to dine or be dined *en cérémonie* Wednesdays and Saturdays, and I do not know which is the more detestable. But on the other days of the week I almost always dine at home—on furlough for an hour or so. If you will come with or without notice on any Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday, you will always find broken meats, ramshackle company, an odd Radical, an Old Whig, a strong Tory, and occasionally a *Traverser* (masculine for Traviata) picked up on the spot in the H. of C. and served hot and hot. If this *menu* with a bottle of claret smiles upon you, you will find it on all *profane* days with the warmest of welcomes at 7, Grafton Street. Do you remember the meeting at Ripon; how strange all that has happened to all of us since.

During the late summer of this year Harcourt went as usual to Scotland yachting with his wife. From Loch Alsh he wrote to Ponsonby:

BALMACARRA, LOCH ALSH.—I am living here in the midst of Celts and Papists on the West Coast of Scotland who have no thoughts of dynamite and are as loyal subjects and peaceful citizens as if they were Lowland Presbyterians. . . .

We have had delicious weather yachting about the Islands for the last three weeks and not a day's rain even in Skye. . . . We weathered Cape Wrath last Tuesday in a perfect calm, and my wife wished to go on to the Orkneys, but I was too prudent to attempt it on the very day of the Equinox, and accordingly a gale came on next day from the East which would probably have sent us to the bottom.

I hope the weather will allow us to keep the sea a week or two longer. We make this place head-quarters, and come back at intervals to boxes and the baby. . . .

His son, who had been shooting partridges at Studley, joined the family, and they set sail again for the Outer Hebrides, where they were caught in a great gale. "It is wonderful to think," he wrote to his sister, "that old Sam Johnson should have navigated these strong waters in an open boat in November when they are now sometimes as much as we can manage in a good steam yacht." He returned to London before his visit to Glasgow, and writes to his wife who had remained in Scotland, that he finds "this house lonely," and that "you had better house Bobs as soon as possible in 'Grafton Street, Hay Hill home.'" He is full of complaints that he has had no letter from his wife or Loulou, only telegrams, says he is "homesick without a family," and concludes:

. . . This is my birthday dearest—the first I think I ever spent quite alone. I have thought much of you all and the happiness you have made for me. I don't think any man was ever more completely happy in his wife and children and his home. God bless you all for it, and kiss one another all round on my behalf. How I wish I was with you to do it for myself.

During his visit to Balmoral in October he kept his wife informed of the life at Court, the company there, his after-dinner talks with the Queen and the manners and customs in vogue. "We wear *trousers* and not *knees*, which indicates a more relaxed tone of Society than Windsor, and the dinner last night was pleasant enough. I at once told many stories of Bobbie which were well received." Later, in connection with his speech at Derby (November 26) he paid a visit with Loulou to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth, where he tells his wife there was a family party of twenty-four—"very amiable, not very lively. There is only Emma (Lady Ed. Cavendish) who can be regarded as flirtable . . . I am very glad of a day's quiet rest, for after a speech I always feel as if the virtue had gone out of me."

CHAPTER XIX

PHŒNIX PARK

Parnell's leadership—Cabinet discussion over coercion—Arrest of Parnell—Harcourt and the Irishmen in the House—Demand for Davitt's release—Forster's Coercion Bill—Gladstone's Land Bill—Fenian outrages in England—Fenian propaganda in the States—Parnell arrested once more—Harcourt's speech at Derby on Ireland—The Errington Mission—The Kilmainham negotiations—The Phœnix Park murders—The Crimes Bill—Opponents of coercion in the Cabinet—Lord Spencer's moderate attitude—Gladstone's Arrears Bill—Correspondence with Lord Spencer—The Queen's interest in the Bill—Abandonment of night search—Harcourt's disagreement with Gladstone on Irish policy—Request for English police in Dublin refused by Harcourt—The Maamtrasna murders.

MEANWHILE the great drama that was to dominate the life of the Government, and in which Harcourt became involved as one of the principals, had begun to unfold. With the election of Parnell to the leadership of the Irish Party at the opening of the new Parliament the Irish agitation entered on a new and more formidable phase. It would have done so in any case, for the succession of bad harvests from 1877 to 1879 had shown that the Land Act of 1870 was inadequate to the needs of the tenants. They could not pay their rents, and evictions had greatly increased in number. The Bright clause of the Act intended to facilitate the peasants' purchase of land was practically inoperative, and a radical revision was plainly necessary. The Government, through the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, brought in in June 1880, had gone a long way to meet the Irish demand for the recognition of full tenant right, but this wise measure was rejected by the House of Lords,

and the discontents grew. They were focussed in two men who embodied the new policy.

The amiable spirit of Isaac Butt had given place to a resolute hostility that aimed at making the evictions and government itself impossible. Michael Davitt, that romantic figure with the tragic face and the armless sleeve, had returned to Ireland some two years before after eight years spent in Dartmoor prison, and had founded the Irish Land League in October 1879, with Parnell as its first President. The American Fenians would have nothing to do with the parliamentary movement and distrusted the Land League, but Parnell had visited America and secured much financial help, and, returning, announced in his historic speech at Ennis on September 18, 1880, a new strategy which was promptly adopted against Captain Boycott, and became known by that victim's name. Famine threatened, evictions and outrages became more numerous, and in many districts the new plan of isolating, as if he were a leper, the man who took a farm from which another had been evicted was carried out. As the autumn advanced the difficulties of the Cabinet increased. Gladstone, foiled by the Lords in his policy of appeasement, and determined to carry through a new Land Bill, was opposed to coercive measures; but the Opposition were crying out for them, and Dublin Castle was demanding them. The letters of the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Cowper, urged strong action, and Forster, the Irish Secretary, demanded the suspension of Habeas Corpus. "The actual perpetrators and planners [of the outrages] are old Fenians and old Ribbonmen and *mauvais sujets*," he said. "They would shrink into their holes if a few were arrested."

Within the Cabinet all was confusion in regard to policy. Chamberlain and Dilke threatened resignation on the one side, Cowper and Forster on the other. "I saw Harcourt," writes Dilke[1] in his diary (November 15), "and told him that I should follow Chamberlain in resigning if a special Irish coercion session were to be called. I saw

[1] Gwynn and Tuckwell, *Life of Sir Charles W. Dilke*, i. 246.

Chamberlain immediately after the Cabinet which was held this day. Bright and Chamberlain were as near splitting off at one end as Lord Selborne at the other." Next day Harcourt received a note from Chamberlain making the sensible suggestion that if he must bring in a Coercion Bill to please Forster and the Tories he should (pending the production of a Land Bill) accompany it with a measure of one clause suspending evictions for three months.

The situation was aggravated by the arrest on November 11 of Parnell and other officials of the Land League for inciting to the non-payment of rent. The trial in Dublin lasted twenty-one days and ended, as it was expected to end, in a fiasco. The jury after four hours could not agree. They were sent back by the judges, and two hours later summoned again. "There is no good in keeping us here any longer," said the foreman; "we'll never agree." "We are ten to two," said another of the jurymen, and the gallery burst into applause. Parnell left the Court victorious. Irish opinion was solidly at his back and at the back of the League.

At this time Harcourt was hostile to coercive measures, and in writing to Gladstone (November 18) urged delay. The case was not yet made out. "Of course *The Times* and the *Telegraph* and generally the Jingo Press are as usual for 'blood and thunder,'" but the provincial Press was more reasonable, and he observed in the papers "that Campbell-Bannerman (a very shrewd and sensible man) took credit to the Government for not having been frightened into resort to measures beyond the present law." To Chamberlain, Harcourt was urging moderation on the other side. "Let us all stick to the ship." Forster, he said, was like the Yankee general after Bull Run—"not just afraid, but dreadful demoralized." Forster was demanding a meeting of Parliament before Christmas, but Gladstone was silent on the subject. On December 11 Lewis Harcourt took a note from his father to Dilke: "L. will tell you what he heard from Brett (Lord Esher, Hartington's private secretary). It is odd that the Sawbones should know what

we are trying to find out." Sawbones was Gladstone's physician, Sir Andrew Clarke, who had told Mr. Brett that Parliament was to meet before Christmas.

But "Sawbones" was wrong. Parliament did not meet before Christmas. It met on January 6 in an atmosphere of impending trouble. Coercion and land legislation were to be the solvents of the trouble. The Irish demanded precedence for the Land Bill, but Forster was insistent and got precedence for a Protection of Person and Property Bill, and an amendment of the law relative to the possession and carrying of arms. There followed scenes unprecedented in the history of Parliament. The weapon of obstruction which Parnell and Biggar had forged in the teeth of Butt's opposition, was now the official instrument of the party, and it reduced Parliament to a bear garden. Through six days and nights the struggle over the first reading continued, and from January 31 to February 2 the House sat continuously for forty-one and a half hours, at the end of which the Speaker, stretching the power vested in the Chair, closed the debate by putting the question that the Bill be now brought in. The House had been for some hours in charge of Lyon Playfair, when at nine o'clock the Speaker returned. Biggar, who was speaking, sat down in accordance with custom, expecting to be called immediately, but the Speaker forthwith closed the debate. This exercise of the independent authority of the Chair won the first round against obstruction, and had been prearranged with Gladstone, with Stafford Northcote's concurrence. The Speaker, however, took this exceptional course, he says in his note of the proceedings, only after stipulating that Gladstone should reconsider the regulation of business, either by giving more authority to the House, or by conferring authority on the Speaker.

Meanwhile pressure was being put upon Harcourt to revoke Michael Davitt's "ticket-of-leave." He finally yielded, and on February 3, in reply to a question from Parnell, he said that Davitt had been rearrested as his conduct was incompatible with his ticket-of-leave. There

followed scenes of intense anger. Davitt was in London at the time, and there is a note in the Journal that records a dramatic incident that preceded his arrest:

February 15.— . . . When Michael Davitt was in the Gallery of the House of Commons about ten days ago Howard Vincent (Scotland Yard) sat by him for some time without recognizing him. Labouchere came up to the Gallery, and having greeted Davitt saw Vincent, upon which he said, "Mr. Vincent—Mr. Davitt—you are two men who ought to know one another." I believe their faces were a sight to be seen. [H.].

On the night of February 9 there was a dinner at Harcourt's house, and afterwards a large party including Chamberlain, Dilke, Childers and many M.P.'s. "Several Irish members were asked," says the Journal, "but none of them came, as I suppose they are still huffy." The comment is not so odd as it seems. It is true that Harcourt had announced the arrest of Davitt, but he was still working for peace, and was personally on good terms with the Irish members. Indeed throughout the fierce struggles that were to ensue this personal good feeling continued, and many records bear witness to it. Contrasting the methods of Forster and Harcourt in the handling of their respective Coercion Bills, Lord George Hamilton in his *Reminiscences and Reflections* says, "Forster . . . seemed perpetually to irritate and aggravate the Irish members. Harcourt, on the other hand, by his control and command of the more polished language of the practised advocate, contrived, with one or two notable exceptions, to handle his opponents very successfully." Lord Eversley, in his *Gladstone and Ireland*, bears the same testimony. But it was more than the skill of the "practised advocate" that explained the difference. Justin McCarthy in his *Reminiscences* pays a high tribute to Harcourt's good feeling during these bitter times:

. . . Sir William Harcourt was, after Gladstone himself, the strongest fighting man on the Treasury Bench. He delighted in hard hitting, and he did not seem to grumble when he received hard hits in return. He stood up to Parnell many a time, and when I summoned up courage enough to assail him I need hardly say that

he gave me a great deal better than I had brought. During the most heated period of that warfare I had on three or four occasions to make application to Sir William Harcourt, as Home Secretary, for some exercise of his official authority on behalf of entirely unknown and uninfluential applicants who knew no other member of the House of Commons. All that I had to ask of Sir William in each of these cases was a slight relaxation of the prison rules. The Home Secretary had only to say that he could not interfere with the ordinary course of prison discipline and there was an end of the matter. My friends and I had made ourselves as troublesome as we could to the Government, and I, like others of us, had had sharp and angry personal altercation across the floor of the House with Sir William Harcourt. Nothing, however, could have been more considerate and more kindly than the Home Secretary's manner of dealing with each of my applications. He sent for me, he gave me a most patient hearing, he went out of his way to make himself acquainted with the circumstances of each case, and to find out if there was anything exceptional in each which would justify any relaxation of the ordinary rules.

Gladstone had consented as unwillingly as most of his colleagues to the arrest of Davitt, and wrote to Harcourt expressing the general feeling that his treatment should be as mild as possible. "Having put him out of the way of mischief, any allowable consideration for him will be so much to the good." Harcourt needed no pressure on the point, and ordered that Davitt should be allowed to work in the governor's garden, be supplied with books, and have all the comforts consistent with detention.

There was much controversy over the legality of the revocation of the ticket-of-leave, and when on August 9 Parnell on a formal motion demanded Davitt's liberation, Harcourt denied that the reimprisonment was due, as Parnell suggested, to the fact that Davitt had spoken of the Chief Secretary as "Outrage Forster," and read a speech in which Davitt had said that "the world will hold England responsible if the wolf-dog of Irish vengeance bounds over the Atlantic at the very heart of the Power from which it is now held back by the influence of the Land League." Would any Power on earth tolerate such language from a Fenian convict? Harcourt proceeded to quote the violent language of O'Donovan Rossa and other Clan-na-

Gael men. He did not know how bitterly hostile these men were to Davitt and the League, and how much truth there had been in Davitt's assertion that it was the Land League which held the wolf-hound of extremism in check.

II

But this is to anticipate events. Meanwhile the struggle at Westminster had been going forward with heightening passion. The Speaker had been given powers of closure, but this only changed the character of the conflict. On February 22 in Committee Harcourt defended emergency legislation on the ground of a Fenian conspiracy. He said that his information was not based on informers but on the declared statement of O'Donovan Rossa in the *United Irishman*, and of John Devoy of the American Land League. O'Donovan Rossa had openly advocated the assassination of ministers and the burning of London. He did not assume that members of the Irish Land League held these views, but the Government was bound to take measures of defence in face of such statements. After fierce scenes which resulted in the expulsion of the whole Parnellite Party, the Bill was passed on February 28. Under the new powers, which meant the suspension of Habeas Corpus, the Lord-Lieutenant was able to arrest anyone on suspicion and hundreds of men were swept into Kilmainham and other gaols.

The next and immediate step was Harcourt's introduction (March 1) of the Peace Preservation Bill (the Arms Bill) which gave powers for the search for and the prohibition of arms. Dilke records (February 12) that Gladstone, Bright and Chamberlain "fought hard in the Cabinet against the Arms Bill. Harcourt, however, said that 'coercion was like caviare; unpleasant at first to the palate, it becomes agreeable with use'; and led by Harcourt the majority insisted on having more coercion." Passion was still high, and the bitter conflicts that had become the commonplace of the debates continued during the passage of the Bill. After a violent attack by Mr. John Dillon (March 3) Harcourt said:

We have heard the doctrine of the Land League expounded by the man who has the authority to explain it; and to-morrow every subject of the Queen will know that the doctrine so expounded is the doctrine of treason and assassination. . . . The language of Redpath which I read the other day, and in which he recommended that the landowners should be shot down like rabbits, was exactly the language which the hon. member for Tipperary has just used. . . .

Who support the Land League in Dublin? Is it supported by Irish subscriptions? Why, the Irish subscriptions are coppers, but the gold and silver come from Fenianism in America.

He did not say that all members of the Land League held Fenian views, but Mr. Dillon had avowed them. Mr. Timothy Healy charged the Home Secretary with "a deliberate untruth" in saying that the doctrine of the Land League was a doctrine of assassination and treason. He was called upon to withdraw the remark, did so but repeated it in other words and was suspended. In committee the temper was milder, Harcourt was conciliatory (he was actually complimented by Mr. Healy on his suavity), and the Bill passed on March 11.

With these repressive powers in hand, Gladstone proceeded with his scheme of appeasement. The Land Bill was a large and just measure, which practically recognized duality of ownership, gave the tenant fair rent, fixed tenure, free sale, and the protection of a commission presided over by a judge or ex-judge, and provided for assistance from the Public Exchequer for the purchase of land by the tenant. It was a good Bill and Parnell knew it was a good Bill, and was determined not to prevent its passage. But the extreme spirits were hostile to "remedial legislation" as the enemy of the national demand for self-government, and between the two views Parnell imposed on his party an attitude of aloofness, neither accepting nor rejecting the measure. "I must congratulate you heartily on the success of the Land Bill," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone (April 11). "It seems almost to have persuaded Parnell to become a Christian." The Opposition this time came from the Conservatives, who, as usual when in opposition, found their refuge in the House of Lords. For a time the Bill was in danger, as this note from the Journal shows:

August 14. Gladstone and W. V. H. had a very hard fight to get the Cabinet to decide on resisting the House of Lords on the Irish Land Bill. The Lord Chancellor, Granville, Kimberley, Northbrook and Hartington were strongly opposed to it, and the rest, with the exception of Bright and Chamberlain, were neutral, but Bright, Chamberlain, Gladstone and Harcourt carried their point. [H.]

The Land Bill became law, but neither coercion nor appeasement brought peace, whether in Ireland or England. Public opinion at home was kept in a state of feverish alarm by rumoured Fenian outrages. There had been an attempted explosion at the Mansion House on May 16, and in June there was an attempt to blow up the Liverpool Town Hall. These troubles did not come from Ireland, but from the Fenians in America, where a propaganda of violence directed against England was being carried on in various publications. In the attempt to deal with this Harcourt came into conflict with some of his colleagues, notably Dilke at the Foreign Office, over the use of secret-service money. The result of this policy, Dilke insisted, was the fabrication of plots, and Harcourt himself later modified his view on the subject. One incident in connection with this phase of the struggle brought the Foreign Office into some trouble. Parnell complained in the House that he had been shadowed in Paris by persons from the Embassy. Lord Lyons denied this and demanded a contradiction. "Harcourt, however, would not allow a contradiction to be given," says Dilke ;[1] "and the fact was that Parnell had been watched, but watched by the Home Office, through the police, without the knowledge of the Embassy." It was not the only subject of conflict between the Foreign Office and the Home Office. Harcourt was receiving despatches from the Foreign Office asking what was to be done about the incendiary literature in America. Harcourt retorted by asking what the Foreign Office thought should be done. To Granville he wrote :

HOME OFFICE, *June* 2.— . . . No doubt these atrocious publications are mainly intended for the purpose of raising money, but as

[1] *Life*, i. 366.

I told the American Minister privately last night it is not compatible with the self-respect of a civilized state that they should allow money to be raised openly on such pretences. . . .

To Gladstone he wrote (June 13) asking him to give him "a good hearing at the Cabinet to-day on the subject of the assassination literature in the United States." The Queen was highly pleased with Harcourt's attitude. She observed, wrote Ponsonby, "that you were the only Minister of the present Government that had any determination." She was much concerned at "the U.S. allowing the propagation of atrocious doctrines to go on publicly," and through Ponsonby wrote to Harcourt calling his attention to the Fenian threats in New York papers against the Prince of Wales. "The Queen would not wish the Princess of Wales to be alarmed by these reports, but does not think it right to keep them from the knowledge of the Prince." Writing to Granville, Harcourt summarizes the incitements to outrage in England—the murder of the Prince of Wales, the murder of Gladstone and so on—in O'Donovan Rossa's New York paper *United Irishman*, and says:

Harcourt to Granville.

HOME OFFICE, *June* 17.— . . . It seems to me that it is absolutely necessary to remonstrate with the Government of the U.S. against the publication of such papers within their jurisdiction. By no possibility could the venerable and venerated name of freedom of discussion or liberty of the Press be prostituted to cover such outrages against public decency. . . . Would the U.S. or any civilized Government tolerate the keeping of an office to collect and distribute money publicly for the purpose of murder and incendiarism directed against individuals even though they happened to be political antagonists within their own borders. If so, will they tolerate the open profession of a trade in assassination and arson aimed at public and private persons in a friendly country. . . .

The emissaries of O'Donovan Rossa come over with the wages of murder publicly advertised in America in their hands, commit the crime for which they were openly hired, and return to the United States to receive publicly the reward which they have earned. This is a state of things which is subversive of the very foundations of society, and the Government of the United States may be confidently appealed to to take such measures as they shall think fit to restrain this open defiance of public morals.

He was writing at the same time in another vein to the Queen, who was concerned about the precautions for her journey to the North. "I wrote to the Queen yesterday," he tells Ponsonby (June 17). "I hope you will take any opportunity of reassuring H.M. as to the question of *actual danger*. I have watched this business most intently now for more than six months. There was a time when I thought the matter really formidable, but the more I learn of it the less it alarms me. . . ." His alarms, however, were renewed a few days later. A vessel arrived at Liverpool bringing barrels of cement alleged to contain infernal machines. The barrels were taken over by the Customs, and in these the machines were found. In communicating the news to Granville, Harcourt says:

RAMSGATE, *July* 3.—I have just read the horrid news of Garfield's assassination. I think this terrible event will considerably modify the views of Lowell and Blaine on the subject of political murder and O'Donovan Rossa's proceedings. It will confirm those who think us right and confound those who have been disposed to ridicule our alarms and condemn our proceedings. . . .

These events led to promise of action by Blaine, who said the United States Government were investigating the origin of the infernal machines, and thought it would be found that very few persons were actually involved. In the meantime, Harcourt was in unceasing correspondence with Vincent and Scotland Yard as to the various outrages and threatened outrages, and was in conflict with some of his colleagues as well as with the Irish on the subject of the opening of suspicious letters. "How I wish August were come," he writes to Ponsonby.

III

But the recess brought little release from the anxieties, in spite of the "amphibian life" in the Hebrides. Harcourt was summoned back to London "to shut up Parnell." The immediate excuse for Parnell's arrest was a speech delivered at Wexford on October 9 in which he said: "The Irishman who thinks that he can now throw away his

arms, just as Grattan disbanded the volunteers in 1789, will find, to his sorrow and destruction, when too late, that he has placed himself in the power of the perfidious and cruel and relentless British enemy." Gladstone he described as "this masquerading knight errant, this perfidious champion of the rights of every other nation, except those of the Irish nation." He asserted that Gladstone had admitted that England's mission in Ireland had been a failure, and that Irishmen have established their right to govern Ireland by laws made by themselves. Forster took the opinion of the Irish law officers on this speech, and then crossed over to England to attend a meeting of the Cabinet, where it was decided to arrest Parnell under the terms of the Coercion Act. Messrs. Dillon, Sexton and O'Kelly were arrested at the same time. Biggar and Healy escaped by remaining in England.

Granville, writing to Selborne [1] (October 12) about the Cabinet decision to arrest Parnell, said, "No opposition except from Harcourt, who took legal points on which he appeared to be wrong." His opposition was obviously Pickwickian, for writing to his wife on the day of Parnell's arrest (October 13), Harcourt said, "It is a great event, and it is difficult to foresee all the consequences, but it was inevitable." What the effect will be on his reception at Glasgow which was one-third Irish he did not know. "We may be in civil war by that time. But one can never tell. The Irish are like the West coast gales, one can never guess when or whence they will blow or cease." And three days later he writes again to his wife:

> . . . Forster goes on bagging his Leaguers, and Dillon and Sexton are now in the mouse trap. I am sorry he has missed Healy, who is the most dangerous, and T. P. O'Connor, who is the noisiest of them all. I am glad our friend A. M. Sullivan and O'Connor Power are out of the row. . . . I fear nothing at Balmoral but the cold, as I am sure H.M. will be radiant at all this coercion.

But while endorsing and taking his share in carrying out the policy of coercion, Harcourt did not forget the causes

[1] Lord Selborne, *Memorials Political and Personal*, ii. 30.

of discontent or the need of removing those causes. In his speech at Derby (November 26) he dealt exclusively with Ireland, and made a reasoned reply to Salisbury's accusation that the lawless condition of that country was due to Liberal weakness and that the spirit of the Land Act was an attack on property. Harcourt took the ground that Ireland's grievances, especially in regard to the land, were real grievances, that they were chiefly due to Tory misgovernment in the past, and that while it was the duty of the Government to maintain order, it was not less their duty to remove the causes of discontent. It was soon obvious that the Coercion Act was a failure, and that the imprisonment of Parnell and his colleagues was worse than useless. "If you are arrested, who will take your place?" Parnell was asked at a meeting at Wexford when his arrest was anticipated. "Captain Moonlight will take my place," he replied.

Events confirmed the forecast. The condition of Ireland grew steadily worse during the winter, outrages increased threefold, and the no-rent propaganda spread like a prairie fire. Gladstone had no liking for and little faith in repression, and several of his colleagues in the Government were notoriously hostile to it. He was feeling his way already to a large solution of the ancient quarrel, and in the early days of the new Session (February 18) said in the House that a demand from Ireland that purely Irish affairs should be under purely Irish control was not in his opinion so dangerous that it should be refused consideration, but the proper way of meeting it was to require those who proposed it to say what provision they intended to make for the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. In the meantime a minor storm had arisen in regard to the Errington Mission to Rome, which fanned the old embers of "No Popery" into a feeble flicker. Harcourt was a stalwart of Protestantism, but he believed that any influence which could be brought to bear on the political situation should be invoked, and in sending a "formula" on the subject to Granville he said:

Harcourt to Granville.

HOME OFFICE, *February* 12, 1882.— . . . In such a state of things as that which exists in Ireland I for one should not be afraid to assert that I had had recourse to any instrument which offered a legitimate prospect of sustaining the framework of society. I should point out how mischievous it is by such questions as those now put to seek to influence religious animosities at a moment when it is of the highest consequence to rally men of all creeds and opinions to the side of order and good government. I would add that if the clergy of the Church of Rome and their Head are willing to aid in the difficult task of tranquillizing Ireland it is not the business of any wise Government or any good citizen to repel their co-operation in a spirit of intolerance, but rather to welcome their co-operation in the common cause.

Granville endorsed Harcourt's formula, and the "No Popery" alarm soon vanished before the impending rupture. Cowper, writing from Dublin, admitted the failure that had attended the policy of repression. "Every one," he said, "advised us to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act. . . . The police led us quite astray. They said they knew all the people who got up the outrages, and that if the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended they could arrest them. Of course we found out afterwards that they were mistaken." What was to be done? Coercion had failed: let us have more coercion, was the demand of Cowper and Forster. But Gladstone would not advance deeper into that bog except under compulsion. If he did the rupture would not be prevented; it would only be changed in character. Moreover the Tories at this moment exhibited a singular moderation in regard to Ireland, called through John Gorst for a new departure, protested through Sir John Hay against the imprisonment of large numbers of Her Majesty's subjects in solitary confinement, without cause assigned and without trial, and asked, through W. H. Smith, for an extension of land purchase.

Meanwhile, through Captain O'Shea, Parnell was in communication with Gladstone and Chamberlain. The former apprised Forster of what passed and of the ideas under consideration. They involved on the one side the introduction of an Arrears Bill to calm the discontents in Ireland,

and on the other the exercise of Parnell's influence to slow down the agitation. Through this policy of appeasement, Parnell said, in a letter dated April 30, that he looked for co-operation of the Irish party and the Liberal party, and an improvement which would speedily justify the Government in dispensing with coercive measures. The night before, at the Royal Academy dinner, Forster had told Harcourt that he would resign "if it is decided to let out the men." He was sympathetic on the question of arrears, but he would not sanction the release of Parnell. The tide, however, was against him. Hartington was the last doubtful to be won over, as the following entry in the Journal indicates:

May 1. W. V. H. and Granville went this morning to Devonshire House to square Hartington for the Irish crisis, as he seems to doubt the advisability of releasing the suspects against Forster's will and thereby forcing his resignation. [H.]

The prisoners were released next day, and the same day the resignations of Lord Cowper and Forster were announced in the House.

Lord Spencer was appointed Lord-Lieutenant, and Chamberlain had expressed his readiness to take the Irish Secretaryship. In the end, says Sir Charles Dilke,[1] after the offer had been made to and rejected by Hartington, his brother Lord Frederick Cavendish was chosen. Harcourt had suggested the appointment of Dilke, but Gladstone in reply urged "a less aspiring course and no seat in the Cabinet," which Dilke made a condition of acceptance—hence Cavendish. Harcourt in his reply (May 4) said: "F. Cavendish is like the *ἀμύμονες*, a man whom all like and all respect. His self-sacrifice will command for him still greater esteem. All that I can say of him is that I think he is *too good for the job*." He then went on to say that the case of Davitt was pressing and asked for Gladstone's opinion about his release. He had that day received the following telegram from the Queen:

May 4, 11.30 p.m.—Is it possible that M. Davitt, known as one

[1] *Life*, i. 440.

of the worst of the treasonable agitators, is also to be released? I cannot believe it. Three suspects were spoken of, but no one else. I had not heard a word about the former.

Two days later, by which time Davitt was free, there came an indignant letter from Ponsonby, protesting against the release of Davitt, stating that the Queen thought she ought not to have learned of the fact through the parliamentary report, and concluding "The Queen cannot deny that she looks with great anxiety to the effect which will be produced in Ireland by the change of policy in the Government." A little later she telegraphed to Harcourt, "Have you seen how Davitt profits by his release? Is this language to be tolerated with impunity?" Harcourt wrote a soothing letter, impressing on the Queen his confident belief that Davitt's influence was being used against outrage. This view was confirmed in a letter (May 11) from Howard Vincent at Scotland Yard to Harcourt in which he said that "Davitt will do anything I want and give every assistance that is possible."

IV

Meanwhile a crime of a shocking and unprecedented kind had plunged the country in anger and alarm and thrown its baleful shadow over the new policy of conciliation. Lord Frederick Cavendish had gone to Ireland immediately on his appointment as Irish Secretary, and on the evening of May 6 he and his Under-Secretary, Mr. Burke, were stabbed to death as they were walking in Phœnix Park, Dublin. There had been a Cabinet meeting that morning to consider the closure proposals of the Government embodied in the new rules of procedure introduced in February. Gladstone had favoured accepting the Tory two-thirds amendment which made it practically impossible to apply the closure against the regular Opposition. Harcourt was strongly opposed to this concession, and as he was unable to be at the Cabinet he wrote a long letter to Gladstone protesting against the compromise and the futility of surrender to the Opposition. "I feel very sure," he said,

"we ought to stand to our guns and fight it. If we fall we shall fall creditably. But the H. of C. dare not destroy us. The thought of what is to come after us is too dark." After the Cabinet Gladstone replied explaining the grounds on which the majority came to a decision contrary to the view of Harcourt.

A few hours later, Gladstone and Harcourt met at dinner at the Austrian Embassy, and it was there at about ten o'clock that the Home Secretary received the appalling tidings from Dublin. This was the message that was put into his hand at the table:

Lord-Lieutenant to Home Secretary.

May 6, 1882.—I grieve to say that the Under-Secretary has been murdered and Lord Frederick wounded, I fear dangerously, while walking through Phœnix Park. Bodies found about 7 o'clock.

Upon Harcourt fell the painful task of breaking the news to Hartington, who was dining that night with Lord Northbrook, and had asked Harcourt to join him there later to talk over the closure. Upon the principals of the political drama the news fell with devastating effect. Horror at the crime and sorrow at the bereavement were mingled with despair at the blow that had been struck at the new policy of peace. Lord Esher, who was then Hartington's secretary, has described to me the emotions of the next morning when it was his duty to call on Hartington, the Duke of Devonshire, and Harcourt in turn. "All were stricken with grief," he said, "but it was Harcourt who seemed to me most utterly broken and unmanned." The blow fell with almost equal ruin upon the Parnellites. Lord Spencer had no doubt from the first of their entire freedom from complicity in the crime. In a letter despatched by special messenger to Harcourt, written on the Monday, Spencer gave a graphic description of the events leading up to and following upon the tragedy, and continued:

Spencer to Harcourt.

Viceregal Lodge, *May* 8.— . . . You will do all that you can, I know, for Lady Frederick and all the family, and I think it best to write this to you to use as you think best. I still hope that Lady

Spencer will not come. I have no apprehension whatever as to myself. My impression is, though it is rash to say so now, that the extreme party of violence saw that the party of order had struck a distinct blow, and were succeeding in winning to their side many people who had before connived at crime, and that they plotted this foul deed to exasperate England and prevent the healing process continuing. But these are not moments for political speculation. I feel that it is essential to be calm and not influenced by panic. I have several cool heads about me, and I have every confidence in them. . . .

I have written coldly, but I rather dread saying what I feel; indeed I cannot realize yet what has happened. It is a ghastly dream.

Meanwhile, replying to a telegram which he had received from Spencer on the Sunday morning, Harcourt wrote:

Harcourt to Spencer.

May 7. . . . You know what we all feel for you and how much we admire your braveness and coolness in this terrible trial. I have just seen Lady Spencer. She of course would wish to join you, but acquiesces in your wise decision that she should remain here. I write nothing about public affairs, on which you will hear from Gladstone. I only write to assure you of our deep sympathy and affection for you. Poor Hartington is dreadfully grieved, and you may imagine what it is to the rest. God help you, and we will do all we can to help you. . .

It was a fearful task telling the news. I got your telegram about 10 p.m. at dinner at the Austrian Embassy, where Gladstone was, and I had to find Hartington at Northbrook's party.

For Parnell the position was one of extraordinary difficulty. He had written on the Monday to Gladstone offering in consequence of the assassinations to resign his seat, but was told that it was not advisable to do so. In the House the next day, replying to Gladstone's statement of his intention to bring in a Bill for the repression of crime in Ireland, he agreed that the Prime Minister could do nothing else, expressed his horror at the crime, and declared his conviction that it had been "committed by men who absolutely detest us and who have devised that crime and carried it out as the deadliest blow which they had in their power to deal against our hopes in connection with the new course on which the Government had just entered." He

himself was in imminent danger, and applied to Harcourt for protection. This incident was not without a gleam of comedy, which is recorded in the Journal:

May 9.—Parnell has applied for police protection, and in granting it W. V. H. said "He was glad Parnell was now suffering himself some of the tortures he had inflicted on others during the past two years."

May 11.—I went to Lord Frederick's funeral at Chatsworth to-day. I gathered from what W. V. H. said last night he would not be sorry if it became known that Parnell had asked for and received protection, so I thought the best way of spreading it was by telling it to my five companions in the train (names suppressed) as a great secret, and expect soon to see it in the papers. . . .

May 12.—I am much amused to find a paragraph in to-day's *Standard* announcing that Parnell has asked for and obtained police protection. I wonder which of the five men I told it to is the authority. [H.]

Of the spirit in which the calamity was received by those who felt it most, there is no more beautiful witness than the following letter:

Lady Frederick Cavendish to Harcourt.

May 12.—How can I ever thank you enough for writing to me with all the weight that lay upon you yesterday? Your letter is one that I shall always treasure. Let me thank Lady Harcourt too for President Lincoln's noble words. It is curious she should have sent them, for my husband had a most special veneration for him, and I shall never forget how deeply he was moved by that terrible murder. Little did I dream his own death would be so similar. God grant that the evil intended in *this* case may fail as utterly as it did in the other! Indeed you do dwell on the one mighty hope that above all sustains me—that my darling's death may in God's providence do more for Ireland than ever his life could have done. Through all the terrible difficulties and dangers good may come at last. I will try to have long patience. . . .

The same enlightened spirit breathed through Spencer's communications to Gladstone and Harcourt. He was shocked at the evidence of the incapacity of the police, urged Harcourt to do what he could in cities like Liverpool where it was confidently believed that the arrangements for these murders were completed, asked for measures more effective than the amendment of the jury laws, and urged a request to the United States Government to deal with

people like O'Donovan Rossa, but warned the Government against panic, rejected the idea of martial law, and declared that "we must to the utmost utilize the good feeling expressed, so that good may come out even of this ghastly tragedy." In writing to him the same day Harcourt explained the measures he was taking and the assistants he was sending him (Brackenbury, Bradford, and Hamilton), and continued:

Harcourt to Spencer.

May 8. . . . We got Gladstone, not without difficulty, to consent that the Protection of Life Bill should take precedence of all other measures. I am strongly in favour of the special tribunal clause, and shall support and I hope carry in the committee of the Cabinet to-morrow. . . . *We can carry whatever you wish now without difficulty; so you have only to express your view and it will be carried into effect.* Our police are all in favour of a large reward being offered. . . . But on reading the passage in your letter to Gladstone objecting to a reward I of course suspended action. I should, however, be glad if you would telegraph me your final view in the matter, as the opinion of our police may have weight with you. It is to be considered that we have to deal with the members of secret societies, that informers are in peril of their lives, and you cannot expect they will *peach* unless you give them a sum sufficient to enable them to live somewhere in safety. You must also remember that we want to buy American evidence, which is probably to be had for money. The plot was probably American, and you must think of the chance of buying evidence abroad as well as in Ireland.

Everything passed off well in the House. Gladstone bore up very well; and Forster's speech about poor F. C. and Burke was very touching.

Your letter I sent on to Lady Spencer, and I think it reassured her a good deal, and she is more satisfied to stay where she is.

Good-bye, my dear Spencer. You are a noble fellow; I have always admired you, and at this moment there is no man I admire half so much. Depend upon it, your colleagues who owe you so much will do all in their power to strengthen your hands in the terrible task you have so bravely undertaken.

In the meantime the question of a successor to Lord Frederick was urgent. After the murder, Dilke received a note from Chamberlain telling him to "prepare for an offer." It was a reminder to him of the compact, and Dilke adhered to it. A note from the Journal (May 8) records what happened:

A Cabinet at 5 this afternoon in Gladstone's room at the House of Commons. Dilke was offered and pressed to accept the Chief Secretaryship for Ireland, but refused unless he had a seat in the Cabinet. All the Ministers were furious. [H.]

The objection to a seat in the Cabinet was largely based on the fact that the Lord-Lieutenant was himself in the Cabinet. Gladstone was prepared to invite Dilke to be present when Irish affairs were discussed, but this did not satisfy the Dilke-Chamberlain demand. With Dilke's refusal, the post was offered to Mr. G. O. Trevelyan, who at once entered on his grave duties. The consequential changes in the Ministry had one feature of interest. They introduced Campbell-Bannerman to office as Financial Secretary at the War Office.

V

While the funeral of Lord Frederick Cavendish was taking place at Chatsworth, Harcourt was introducing (May 11) the Prevention of Crime (Ireland) Bill, generally known as the Crimes Bill, in the House of Commons. This measure, contemplated before the Phœnix Park tragedy, had become an actuality as the result of that tragedy. Unlike the Forster Coercion Act of the previous year, which was the negation of law and which had utterly failed in practice, the Crimes Bill aimed at strengthening the administration of the law. Trial by jury had broken down, and Harcourt's Bill provided for a special tribunal of three judges to deal with cases of treason, murder, attempt to kill, crimes of violence and attacks on dwelling-houses whenever the Lord-Lieutenant thought an impartial trial could not be obtained under the ordinary law. The tribunal would sit without a jury, and would decide questions of law and fact, but their judgment must be unanimous, and there would be a right of appeal to the Court for Criminal Cases Reserved. The preventive measures included the power of search by day or night in proclaimed districts, the arrest of persons out at night who could not satisfactorily explain their business, power to deal with aliens, and to arrest strangers. Among the offences liable to be brought before

a court of summary jurisdiction by two stipendiary magistrates were incitement to crime, membership of secret societies, aggravated assaults on police and process-servers, and intimidation. Power was sought to deal with newspapers and to exact caution money from them, and to prevent unlawful assemblies. The duration of the Act was to be for three years.

Harcourt's task was not an easy one. Public opinion, shocked by the tragedy, demanded some action, but the return to coercion, even under legal forms, was profoundly distasteful in many quarters. The Press generally expressed disapproval. Liberal opinion outside the House disliked the suggestion that charges so vaguely defined as treason or intimidation should be heard without a jury, and the Irish judges themselves expressed their unwillingness to accept the duties assigned to them. Parnell in the debate paid his tribute to the spirit in which the English people had received the blow of May 6, but prophesied that the Act would be a failure, that it would inflict wrong on the innocent without reaching those who sought by crime to make constitutional agitation impossible, and that England had yet to discover the secret of that "undiscoverable task," the task of governing one nation by another. But the House was wellnigh unanimous, and leave to bring in the Bill was carried by 327 to 22, most of the Irish members absenting themselves from the House but no fewer than 27 supporting the Government.

It was not in the House, but behind the scenes, that Harcourt's battle raged most severely. In the House, there was criticism as the Bill progressed from Liberals like Horace Davey and Mr. (Lord) Bryce, but the Parnellites had been too much shattered by the blow to offer their usual obstinate resistance. Their attitude is indicated in a letter from Harcourt to Spencer:

Harcourt to Spencer.

May 14.— . . . Poor Hartington is sadly broken down. He was at the Cabinet yesterday. I had a most touching letter from Lady

Frederick Cavendish, who clings to the consolation that poor Freddy's death may be of use to Ireland. The outbreak of the Parnellites on Thursday night in the House of Commons was owing to Forster's unfortunate speech, which provoked them to desperation. They had intended to be very conciliatory. I believe they are thoroughly frightened and would do all they could to restore peace. But I fear their powers for good are far less than their powers for evil.

I believe they will make no *obstinate* resistance to the Prevention of Crime Bill. There is necessarily great alarm as to what the desperadoes may do next, and London is full of threatening letters and rumours of all kinds. The attempted explosion at the Mansion House was a Fenian scare of the old clumsy kind. I made it a reason for having all the Irish quarters in London beat up last night. My police report very little Fenianism in London, but of course it may be imported any day either from America or Ireland. . . . You will probably have been told that we have remonstrated with the United States Government, and had a cautious but favourable reply. We have given instructions to have the ships watched when they get to America. . . .

"I am not afraid of the *fervida dicta* of the Irish," he writes three days later to Spencer, "but I much more dread the *Jupiter hostis*. In his heart Gladstone hates the Bill, and will with great difficulty be kept up to the mark." Harcourt was smarting at the moment under the fact recorded in Dilke's diary (May 15) that Gladstone had sent Chamberlain to O'Shea to see if Parnell could be got to support the new Coercion Bill with some changes. When, says Dilke,[1] Harcourt heard of this, "which was done behind his back, he was furious, and went so far as to tell me: 'When I resign I shall not become a discontented Right Honourable on a back bench, but shall go abroad for some months and when I come back rat boldly to the other side.'" His indignation exploded in a letter, which has not been preserved, written from Windsor to Gladstone, who promptly wrote acknowledging his "forcible letter," and offering a Cabinet meeting the next day. At this Cabinet (May 17) Harcourt declared that if any change was made in the principle of the Coercion Bill he would resign, adding, according to Dilke, that the Kilmainham Treaty would not be popular when it was discovered that it was

[1] *Life*, i. 445.

negotiated by Mr. O'Shea, the husband of "Parnell's mistress."

But the most formidable antagonist of Harcourt at this stage was Chamberlain, who had arrived at an understanding with Parnell and was, according to Dilke, anxious to resign on account of Harcourt's unyielding attitude on coercion. Writing to Harcourt, Spencer says:

> VICEREGAL LODGE, *May* 22.— . . . I hope the moderate Irish will be consulted as well as Healy, and I gather that J. C. has seen the latter again. He seems to me entirely to miscalculate the situation, and says that if it were not for the necessity of meeting public opinion he would be against all (? repressive) measures. That strikes me as absolutely absurd. I have written to him on his minute and letter. I was a little nettled at his minute and criticisms of my letter to you, for he treated it as if I had taken a line of iron without any bend or consideration of Irish opinion. . . .

Spencer himself through all this turbulent and difficult time preserved a temper of rare patience and wisdom. He had gone to Dublin with Lord Frederick Cavendish to repair the mischief of the Forster Act and to inaugurate a more conciliatory policy. He had seen his hopes shattered on the evening of his arrival by the tragedy within sight of the Viceregal Lodge, but he gave way to no emotion of panic, and in the voluminous correspondence he carried on with Harcourt on the details of the Bill his advice was always for moderation with firmness. The discussion turned mainly on such questions as whether incitement should be included in the scope of "intimidation," whether the search clause should insist on the warrant naming the house, and on the substitution of county court judges for resident magistrates on the tribunal of summary jurisdiction. "Gladstone is very much disposed to close with some or all of these amendments for the sake of peace and inducing the Irish to let the Bill through easily," wrote Harcourt to Spencer (May 17), but he himself was opposed to the changes as bad in themselves and as evidence of vacillation and weakness. He appealed to Spencer, who generally but not invariably supported him, to "write *very* decisively to G. in

this sense and also to Trevelyan, who might otherwise be inclined to yield somewhat to Radical pressure."

A few days later he was in high spirits. The second reading stage had produced a moderate speech from Parnell, who was "in a great state of alarm as to his personal safety," and five days later Mr. Dillon made a violent speech which changed the prospects of the Bill. Writing to Spencer next day Harcourt said:

May 24.—Dillon's diabolical speech to-day and Gladstone's fine reply to it have settled the question of the Bill. All our Radicals feel that after Dillon's speech they cannot do otherwise than support the Bill. There was also some advantage derived from Northcote's denunciation of two spiteful speeches delivered from the Conservative benches by E. Clarke and Ritchie which were made *à l'adresse* of their Irish constituents. . . . Nothing can be better than Trevelyan; he is most popular with all sides of the House of Commons, modest, straightforward, and able—a sort of second Spencer.

Next day Parnell threw over Mr. Dillon, and Harcourt wrote to his wife in good humour over the outlook. Spencer, too, was more cheerful. Outrages were decreasing. "I hope," he said, "Dillon's diabolical speech will not set them going again." He proposed when clear of work to go through the disaffected districts. "Even if they do not show loyalty, it does good in an image-worshipping country to let them see that there is a Government in person. Don't laugh at this view, but it is very true in Ireland."

Meanwhile (May 15–16) Gladstone was introducing the Arrears Bill, which largely embodied proposals elaborated by Parnell in Kilmainham. There was fierce opposition led by Mr. Balfour, and a last *tu quoque* retort from Harcourt. The Bill was read a second time on May 23, and the second reading of the Crimes Bill being completed, the House went into Committee on it. Harcourt still demanded his measure entire. In the House he made certain concessions to Horace Davey, Bryce, and other Liberals, but he would not yield to Davey's amendment to omit felony and treason from the list of charges which could be heard without a jury. Behind the scenes the struggle went doggedly forward. Chamberlain was still in touch with Parnell, and

wrote (June 8) to Gladstone warning him that "if we once fall back into the old condition of exasperation, the reaction in Ireland will be most prejudicial to peace and order." The immediate question was some concessions on the proposal to deal with boycotting. If these were not given, Parnell said things would revert to what they were under the Forster *régime*. Gladstone sent the correspondence to Harcourt, and in replying to Chamberlain said it was not for him "to take any notice of what some would call the threat that things may revert to what they were under the Forster *régime*," and continued:

> . . . I believe that in the matter of what is called coercion my appetite is decidedly less keen than the average appetite even of English Liberals, and even of pretty stout ones. But nothing would induce me to assent to a clause doing less as to boycotting than what I have now said. . . .

Harcourt had won on the boycotting issue, and wrote triumphantly to Spencer (June 8), "We had a most useful discussion yesterday which brought out Gladstone in full force against Boycotting, which is of much importance as the Party were beginning to say that he was lukewarm on the Bill."

With Spencer himself, however, he was in conflict over the question of night search, about which Spencer was lukewarm, or, as Harcourt said, "weak-kneed." Writing to him, Harcourt said:

> . . . I want strongly to urge you to maintain the night search in the Bill by your authority when you write here. I am convinced by my police experience in London that nothing is of so much value as the power to go into (no matter on what pretext) suspicious places by night, if only to note and see who is there. Nothing helps so much to break up gangs of conspirators as the terror of being known to meet together to plot, and this you can only accomplish by night. . . .

But Spencer stuck to his guns, holding that the existing power to enter on the ground that a meeting was being illegally held was sufficient. Harcourt's hostility to negotiations with Parnell continued, and writing to Spencer he says:

Harcourt to Spencer.

LONDON, *June* 12.—I fought out a great battle in the Cabinet on Irish policy on Saturday—Chamberlain contending for the view of making concessions to Parnell and Co., with a view to strengthening his hands as a beneficial influence through whom we might pacify Ireland; I on the other hand maintaining that this was an entire delusion, that either Parnell had the power to control outrage and, if so, that he had not exercised it, or (which is more probable) that he had not the power, in which case he was not worth buying at the price of concessions which independently of him we should not think it wise to make. In short, that we are not in any way to shape our conduct with a view to giving Parnell something to "go to market with." Such a policy in my judgment would not only be discreditable but a failure.

This view, I am happy to say, entirely prevailed (in spite of some disposition in one influential quarter to support the other side). And it was resolved to stick staunchly by the Bill without any negotiation of any kind with the Parnellites, and with no changes except those which you have recommended and which will be notified and introduced at an early stage. If any other decision had been arrived at I would no longer have taken any responsibility for the Bill, and I believe the greater part of the Cabinet shared my determination. . . .

On the same day he sent a secret memorandum to Spencer on the question of the secret societies. Like "Mr. Gladstone, Lord H. and Lord G." he thought no money objection should stand in the way of efforts to grapple with them. But he was growing wise with years:

. . . My experience, however, now of two years' duration in experiments of this character, does not lead me to be sanguine as to the success of this particular method of action. I have endeavoured to purchase information in America with the result of finding that there is great danger of being the victim of deliberate plants by the manipulation or crime (such as the dynamite boxes) for the sole purpose of obtaining money by the very persons who have contrived them. Great prudence and caution is necessary in such proceedings, and I should be glad to have the opportunity of giving Colonel Brackenbury some warnings on this head. . . .

But there were other ways, and he thought it would be "well worth while for Colonel Brackenbury to get the Pinkerton detective agency in the United States to send over to Ireland one of their best confidential agents to communicate with him on their methods of proceeding."

A third communication to Spencer on this day (June 12) found the tireless Home Secretary refusing to accept the Lord Lieutenant's proposal to allow the exclusion of peaceful districts from the operation of the Bill, and pleading with him to stand firm. In the House meanwhile the Bill was labouring through Committee. Harcourt was unyielding on principle, but conciliatory in detail, and his rigour was helped by the seizure of arms—400 Sugden rifles and 25 cases of revolvers, etc.—at Clerkenwell. But he was impatient with the slow progress of the Bill, and writing to Gladstone he said "the time for decided action has arrived":

June 16.— . . . The desire to impede if not to obstruct the Bill was so conspicuous last night all throughout that the temper of our Party was thoroughly roused: they were prepared and eager at one o'clock to have fought it out through the night to get the 7th clause. I with difficulty restrained their ardour after two divisions, as I could not in your absence commit the Government to so strong a measure.

But the feeling is overwhelming that the present state of things is intolerable and that strong measures must be taken.

These men are not only *sans loi* but *sans foi*, and the more concessions that are made the less is the progress accomplished. . . .

Meanwhile from Balmoral a watchful eye was kept upon the struggle, and Harcourt was the recipient of frequent notes from Ponsonby telling him of the Queen's approval of his firmness and urging him to press on with the Bill. H.M. "hopes you will not give way in essential particulars." Ponsonby can well understand that Harcourt must be worn out with this prolonged fight. "The Queen sees this too, but thinks her occasional reminders give you spirit to keep on." Sometimes she takes exception to something said in debate. She does not approve (June 16) of something Trevelyan said against Irish landlords. "H.M. said it was most injudicious for him to swell the cry against them, but could not tell me the exact words, and I have no time to refer to the paper before this goes."

The endless argument with Spencer on limiting the Act to "proclaimed" districts and on the night search goes

on, and Harcourt uses the Clerkenwell capture to tune Gladstone up to concert pitch. He writes:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

June 18.— . . . It is a fortunate capture and will make a great stir—I have never doubted, and doubt still less than ever, that the root of the whole thing in Ireland is a *treasonable conspiracy*, backed by *assassination*, and that the Land League and all the so-called agrarian agitation is only the veil by which it is wrapped up.

O'Shea called upon me yesterday. . . . I know that the main author of the obstruction is Labouchere, who organizes, instigates, and provokes it far beyond the desire of the Irish themselves out of sheer love of mischief. . . .

Two days later he writes to Gladstone, still declining to modify the night search clause and arguing for the application of the Alien Act to England:

. . . It is an absurdity difficult to defend that whilst we remove the American conspirator from Cork—and even from Liverpool if he had been dealt with at Cork—we should allow him to work his will and pull the wires with impunity at Liverpool if he has not landed in Ireland. . . .

But Gladstone, replying the same day, takes his stand on the night search with Spencer against Harcourt. He will ask the Cabinet to meet on the subject if Harcourt thinks it necessary, but only "to state reasons which are for me binding and absolute." He has yielded much both last year and this in deference to the Cabinet.

. . . But (he says) it is quite another matter to pass into law any power, and especially one so invidious, which Spencer is willing to forego. I think you will see it is not strange or unreasonable, from my point of view, that this should stand with me as a principle of action.

At the same time I am most sorry to trouble you, amidst your very severe work, on a matter where our respective views have not been quite the same. But what I say tends to shorten, as I hope, not to lengthen labour.

This decision brought Harcourt to the brink of revolt. Later in the day he wrote to Gladstone, bowing to his decision, but throwing upon him the burden of defining what he considered safe.

. . . When this is settled (he concludes) I hope that you or Tre-

velyan will take charge of this difficult retreat, which I should find it hard to manage with my strong sense of the dangers which it opens, and should probably therefore make a mess of.

Gladstone undertook the task himself in the House the same evening, announcing that the Government would limit the power of night search to cases in which there was a reasonable suspicion that illegal meetings were being held. Harcourt wrote to Spencer next day lamenting the concession to which he had had to yield ("having no support from you"), stating that he had designedly stayed away from the House and predicting evil consequences. "I do *earnestly trust you will countenance no more concessions*," he said. "The House of Commons will not stand them." Spencer replied gently insisting that "I have never felt clearer in my life. In practice we lose nothing."

It was Harcourt's severest check in the struggle; but he had a compensation next day in the shape of a note from the Queen, who said:

WINDSOR CASTLE, *June* 22.— . . . She has observed with satisfaction the manner in which Sir Wm. Harcourt has defended this necessary Bill for Prevention of Crime in Ireland, and the way in which he has resisted those interminable and in many cases really most absurd amendments. It would be a good thing if the clause referring to Aliens could for the present be extended to England.

But when *will* the Bill be passed?

It was not to be passed without a first-rate Irish storm. On June 30–July 1 the House sat continuously for twenty-eight hours on clause 17, proposing that districts should be rated for compensation payable for cases of murder and maiming in the district. The levying of the "blood tax" gave rise to endless amendments. At seven in the morning Harcourt, who had been absent for less than an hour during the whole of the sitting, complained of the intolerable waste of time over amendments which were unreasonable and based on no semblance of argument. The question was put about eight o'clock. Harcourt said that practically two days of parliamentary time had been wasted over a clause of secondary importance, with the deliberate

intention of blocking and impeding the measure devised to stop the horrible and atrocious crimes now being committed in Ireland.

The Chairman, appealed to by Mr. Biddulph, said he thought the systematic obstruction should be stopped, and named seventeen Irish members for persistent and wilful obstruction, and they were duly suspended. Before the sitting closed other members were suspended, after which clauses up to the thirtieth were agreed to.

Next day Harcourt wrote to his wife from Downe Terrace, Richmond :

July 2.— . . . I got down here about 9 o'clock after we had finally shut up the last batch of Irishmen. With some difficulty I prevailed on the Cabinet to go right through committee even if we had to sit through Sunday, and to propose urgency for Monday. We shall now *rush* the Bill through this week.

Yesterday was a great success. It has shown the Irishmen they are not our masters, and that we can when we please brush them away like flies.

It was a great effort and I am a good bit tired, but shall be all right after a little rest. I shall take a week's holiday as soon as the Bill is through. . . .

The Bill was " rushed," but it came near being wrecked in sight of port, and on the very issue about which Harcourt had been overruled. When the amendment on night search was moved by Mr. Trevelyan (July 7) it was fiercely opposed, and Gladstone said that if it were defeated he would have to reconsider his position. In spite of this the amendment was lost by thirteen votes ; but Gladstone decided to continue with the Bill on account of its urgency. Harcourt was entitled to say " I told you so," and he said it to Spencer next day.

Harcourt to Spencer.

. . . Gladstone tried the Party too high, and they revolted as I always expected they would do, and after G. had said that if his amendment was rejected he would have to " reconsider his personal position " we were beaten by 13. The Tories of course were jubilant, and the Liberals in dismay, and for a few hours all London expected the immediate resignation of G. (which he really intended), and consequently the dissolution of the Government and probably

of Parliament. There never was so unnecessary a "pother." But the truth is the House of Commons are determined there shall be no concessions to the Irish. Happily *la nuit porte conseil*, and G. is quite mild here (at the Cabinet), and will make a statement on Monday in the House of Commons which will smooth things down. . . .

Four days later the Bill received the Royal Assent, and there came from Windsor to Harcourt a sigh of relief and approval: "H.M.," wrote Ponsonby, "has been very much pleased with the Government lately in pressing on the Bill, and thinks your management of the Bill has been very good."

But the passage of the Bill was not the end of the trouble. If Gladstone disliked the Crimes Bill, Harcourt had no love for the Arrears Bill, and looked quite frankly and cheerfully to its rejection and the end of the Government. "It is an event I do not at all deprecate, nor would do anything to avert," he wrote to Hartington (July 9). . . . "The *couleur de rose* view in which Gladstone persists in looking at the state of Ireland is most disastrous; in my judgment it incapacitates the Government from doing that which is necessary to restore peace there. I enclose you a letter I have written to G. to-day on that subject. In my opinion the sooner the end comes the better, for this Government is not fit to govern Ireland."

The letter to Gladstone is a formidable and rather passionate indictment of the Government's policy. A few extracts will indicate its character.

Harcourt to Gladstone.

HOME OFFICE, *July* 9.— . . . It is with great regret but with a very deep conviction that I have arrived at the fixed conclusion that all the measures of conciliation which we have passed or proposed have absolutely failed of the object to which they were directed. They have only been regarded as signs of weakness and inspired fresh demands which will never rest short of absolute confiscation of the property of the landlords and a total separation of Ireland from England. These are the avowed objects of Davitt and Parnell, and their ideas have entirely permeated the Irish people.

At this moment the wife of the popular Lord-Lieutenant cannot drive out of the walls of the Castle and cannot walk in the garden except surrounded by police. This is the state of things thirteen years

after the disestablishment of the Irish Church and the passing of the Land Act. These measures just in themselves are useful as quieting our own consciences, but as regards pacifying Ireland they have been—I regret to say it—worse than useless and instead of appeasing dissatisfaction have rather encouraged it by the belief that disorder has been the only instrument which has achieved concession.

I wish I could think that the pending Arrears Bill was likely to mend the state of things. But I find that it is regarded with entire coldness and indifference by those who are the best of judges of Irish opinion. . . . Errington assures me that no one in Ireland cares a straw about it, and that we may make what concessions we please in it to the Lords because no one in Ireland takes any interest in its fate. . . .

I anticipate therefore that the Arrears Bill will perish—certainly in the House of Lords, possibly in the House of Commons—because many in England disapprove it, but much more because no one in Ireland cares to make an effort for it. The Lords may therefore work their will upon it with impunity. . . . There remains now in my belief only one remedy for Ireland, and that is in the most resolute and sternest determination to enforce the law and to exercise to the utmost the powers of repression. . . .

I have been told by Broadhurst and others that any indications of leniency on their part in the progress of the late Bill has been very decisively rebuked by the most Radical constituencies. I feel very strongly that the time is come when we must put the iron heel of government on the head of these foul conspiracies whether they call themselves by the name of the Land League, Fenians or any other name. . . .

I feel sure that the country is resolved that a very different treatment shall be employed from that which we have used latterly with so little effect, and I cannot say that I think the country is wrong.

Gladstone circulated the memorandum to the Cabinet for their comments. "I might have been more struck with Harcourt's letter, if it had not been so like Lord Salisbury's speech of this afternoon," was Granville's reply. Chamberlain's reply was acid and scornful, and his counsel was "steady and patient persistence in well-doing." "I differ utterly from Harcourt's despairing view," was the comment of Carlingford. Generally the Cabinet was against Harcourt, and his anticipations were not fulfilled. The Lords resisted the Arrears Bill, and on August 4 Gladstone wrote to Harcourt for his views as to the basis of a plan of dissolution. But the advice was not needed. The Bill went through, and received the Royal Assent on August 18.

VI

But neither the Crimes Act nor the Arrears Act sensibly changed the situation in Ireland, and the unfailing patience and reasonableness of Spencer was tried to the utmost throughout the autumn. Not only did the outrages continue, but the police of Dublin got out of hand, and Spencer appealed to Harcourt to supplement the Irish force by a body of English constables. Gladstone supported the appeal. "I do not venture to *dogmatize* without knowledge," he wrote to Harcourt (September 1), "but I *think* that were I in your place I should be inclined to offer him (Spencer) a small batch of picked London policemen whose advent would strike terror." But Harcourt pointed out to Spencer the difficulties and dangers of sending an alien police into the country, and his view prevailed. When the situation in Dublin became acute on September 1, Spencer dismissed 234 of the Dublin force, and thereupon practically the whole of the remaining 600 resigned. Spencer at once enrolled special constables, and two days later Gladstone, in acknowledging Harcourt's "clear and forcible statement" of the objections to sending London police to Dublin, was able to say that Spencer's "admirable conduct" had removed the necessity. The dismissed men, with the exception of seventeen, had been reinstated, and the rest of the force had withdrawn their resignations. "The nerve and prudence you displayed," wrote Harcourt to Spencer (September 16), "has placed you in the highest rank of statesmanship, and I think you and Wolseley divide the honours of this time. The Chancellor (Childers) who has been staying with us in the country, and is generally as cold as ice and as impassive as dough, waxed quite enthusiastic as we spoke together of you."

In the meantime there occurred an incident which was to cast its sinister shadow over the future. On January 2, two of Lord Ardilaun's bailiffs, named Huddy, were sent to collect rents in a part of Connemara known as Joyce's country because of the prevalence of that surname, and were

murdered. Their murderers (subsequently executed) were not found at the time, and a terrible sequel to the event took place in August at Maamtrasna in the same country. A party of disguised men entered the house of a man called Joyce, and massacred the man, his wife, his mother, daughter and one son, the other son being severely wounded and apparently left for dead. The murderers had reason to fear that the Joyce family knew of the murder of the two bailiffs. Ten men were arrested, and two turned informers. Of the remaining eight, who were sentenced to death, five had their sentences commuted to penal servitude. The remaining three men were hanged on December 15. Of these three, one, Myles Joyce, declared his innocence even in the moment of being hanged. The two men who died with him, while admitting their own guilt, also dissociated him from complicity in the crime, but Spencer told Harcourt that he was satisfied that the declarations were part of a plot to bring the administration of the law into disrepute, and the capital sentence was not interfered with. The case aroused intense feeling, which was to blaze up again many months later when it became known that Casey, one of the informers, had confessed to the Archbishop of Tuam that he had falsely accused Myles Joyce of being associated with the crime.

This and many other aspects of the Irish situation engaged the attention of Harcourt during the autumn. The Phœnix Park murderers were still undiscovered, and there were other tragic episodes on which he corresponded freely with Spencer—questions of suspects, the commutation of sentences and the personal safety of ministers. Gladstone had written to him suggesting that the Flintshire authorities might be relieved of the cost and duty of "shadowing" him, but Harcourt would take no risks, and writing to Spencer said:

December 24.— . . . I am very glad you are strictly watched. It is most clearly your duty. A blow struck at you would be fatal to the country as well as to your friends. I have insisted on Gladstone submitting to precautions. He had begun to resist, and he has I

am glad to say consented, and I have even myself taken precautions which I had not used before—as these villains are quite capable of striking here when baffled in Ireland. . . .

He was still disposed to think that Gladstone was too conciliatory both to the Irish and the Conservative Opposition. The latter, through Lord Randolph Churchill, had during the autumn session raised again the question of the so-called "Kilmainham Treaty," and Harcourt writing to his wife said:

November 14.— . . . We had an unsatisfactory night in the H. of C. last night, Gladstone giving way in the hope of conciliating opposition, which became all the worse the more he conciliated. He then got very angry, and in a fury demanded an inquiry into the "Kilmainham Compact" which we all decided in the spring should not be given. And now when the whole affair had died out it is blown into a flame again. It is a great scrape, and I don't know what will come of it. . . .

He wrote (November 17) a long letter to Gladstone urging that the inquiry should be limited to the facts and circumstances under which Parnell was released from Kilmainham, and should not traverse confidential correspondence and conversations, a precedent "which would really make the conduct of difficult business of State hereafter impossible. . . . It is a *transaction* which I for one am quite prepared to defend. If Parnell was ready to take the side of order upon any terms which we could fairly accept we were bound to welcome his aid."

CHAPTER XX

HARCOURT AND HIS COLLEAGUES

Government's Egyptian policy—Resignation of Mr. Bright—Harcourt at Balmoral—Pressure from the Queen on Egyptian questions—Harcourt in the New Forest—The closure again—Cabinet reconstruction—Lord Rosebery at the Home Office—Harcourt's improved relations with Gladstone.

IRELAND was not the only capital subject that occupied Parliament and the country during these months. By the irony of events the Government had become involved in a war in Egypt. It was a sequel to the policy started under the previous Government against which Gladstone had protested at the time, but from the consequences of which his Government could not well escape. The joint action of Great Britain and France in promoting internal order in Egypt was never a workable or enduring scheme, and the incompetence and corruption of the Khedive's rule promptly showed its weakness. A revolt, military in form but largely nationalist in character and directed against European intervention in the country, took place under the leadership of Arabi, an able and fanatical man who had risen from the fellah class. The problem of putting down the revolt and restoring order and the authority of the Khedive was a delicate and complicated one, rendered all the more difficult by the fall of Gambetta, who had been the chief spirit in promoting joint French and English action, to the exclusion of other Powers. Gladstone, caught in a net that he would gladly have escaped, would have preferred international action, but this was rendered impossible by France, and when that country overthrew the de Freycinet Ministry rather than lock up any of her soldiers in Egypt

—being then more afraid of Bismarck than of British aggression—the English Government found themselves alone with the task of putting down the rebellion. The result was the bombardment of Alexandria and the subsequent campaign under Wolseley which ended in the victory at Tel-el-Kebir and the suppression of the insurrection.

The pursuit of this policy cost Gladstone the heaviest personal loss his Ministry had sustained. Bright resigned his seat in the Cabinet rather than be a party to military action. Harcourt wrote to him (July 18) expressing his "profound sorrow" at the thought that they were no longer colleagues and adding:

. . . No man in England has more truly earned the right to determine what is just and right than you have.

Quite apart from the serious loss to the Government which your retirement necessarily creates, to me it is specially painful from the deep personal regard and attachment (if you will permit me the word) which I have so long felt for you. . . .

But though he lamented the loss of Bright, he did not share his disagreement with the policy of the Cabinet, and when the news of Tel-el-Kebir reached him at Balmoral, where he was on duty as Minister in attendance, he telegraphed the good tidings to his wife, and writing to her the same day said:

Balmoral Castle, *September* 15.— . . . Every one here of course in highest spirits. We had a jolly dinner last night. I sat between Princess Beatrice and the Duchess of Albany, who inquired much after you. I had a long talk after dinner with the Duchess of Connaught, who is very charming. She has been very anxious but is now quite happy. She promises to show me the baby and talked much of her illness.

The Queen sent for me immediately on my arrival and I had a long conversation with her. She is quite pleased with everything and everybody except the G.O.M.[1] . . .

[1] The authorship of the sobriquet "Grand old Man" for Gladstone is generally attributed to Harcourt. Sir Henry Lucy in his *Diary of the Salisbury Parliament* says: "The honour of its invention belongs to Sir William Harcourt. It will be found in one of his early addresses to his constituents in Derby, and had its birth amid the exultation that followed on Gladstone's return to power in 1880." A claim for Bradlaugh has also been set up. The phrase appears in a speech made by him in 1881.

The cause of the exception is revealed in another letter to his wife in which he says that " dear Henry " (Ponsonby) " tells me that the Queen is in high good humour, but cross with the G.O.M. who in writing to her has never said a word about the Duchess of Connaught " (who had recently been confined).

To Spencer next day Harcourt writes of the " glorious Egyptian news," and says :

> Balmoral Castle, *September* 16. —. . . It really seems as if at last this unfortunate Government was about to have a turn of luck. It has all been very well done, and Childers and Northbrook deserve the highest credit for the way in which they have organized victory. The business of the settlement will be a difficult one. The Queen is very urgent that " we should keep a strong hold on Egypt—not exactly ' annexation ' "—but evidently as near to it as possible. And I believe the country will expect to have something for its money—though what that something is it is not very easy to describe. I fear the cracking of this nut portends early and frequent Cabinets, which with the prospect of an autumn session is not agreeable, though I feel ashamed to grumble to you who have no holiday at all. . . .

To Gladstone he wrote in much the same terms, and took the opportunity to convey a hint to him to placate the Queen. " And I rejoice specially," he said, " for the poor little Duchess of Connaught who has been very anxious, but is now comforted to think that her warrior (the Duke was engaged in the Wolseley expedition) is eating a comfortable dinner at Shepherd's Hotel, Cairo." Harcourt, like Disraeli, knew how to cultivate royalty. " I sit every day at dinner," he wrote to his son, " between alternate Princesses, Beatrice, Albany and Connaught. I have a good deal of baby talk with the Duchess of Connaught, who is a very charming little woman." All royalties, however, were not charming, and he tells Gladstone that the Prince of Wales is bringing to Abergeldie the King and Queen of Greece, who are regarded as " *de trop* in the Highlands."

Gladstone promptly replied to the hint from high quarters about annexation. Writing to Harcourt at Balmoral, he says :

Gladstone to Harcourt.

HAWARDEN CASTLE, *September* 17.— . . . Were we not pleased and thankful now, what would make us so? No doubt great difficulties remain: and we have great questions to consider. The first of them is whether Egypt is to be hereafter, and whether we are now to lay the ground for her being, for the Egyptian people, or for somebody else? I say for the Egyptian people, just as Bulgaria for the Bulgarian people, although Egypt cannot at the moment undertake so large a share of self-government, and is also hampered with definite external obligations which she cannot set aside.

The Queen expressed to me at Osborne a desire that Egypt should be independent. There was not then as much temptation, as there is now, to say otherwise.

The great question of British interest is the Canal, and this turns on neutralization, aye or no. Pray turn your mind to it. There is much difference of opinion; and we must endeavour to *expiscate* the matter thoroughly. (you are a Scot for the time being). . .

The hand of the London police is now off me: but in Flintshire (where they are considerate beyond anything) I still, to my serious regret, weigh heavily upon the rates. . . .

Harcourt was in an awkward position. The Queen had assumed that his quiescence on the subject of the Egyptian settlement meant acquiescence, and he wrote to Granville for a lead as to "the sort of tone" he wished him to take. To Gladstone he wrote:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

BALMORAL CASTLE, *September* 18.— . . . I pointed out yesterday to the Queen that we had entered into obligations of disinterestedness to Europe from which we could not in honour depart; that your declarations in that direction were in fact the condition of the friendly neutrality of Europe in the recent contest; and that therefore it was out of the question that we should claim to settle the matter out of hand by ourselves and with regard solely to our own interest. This was a doctrine which I found not at all palatable. . . . The Q. is very anxious for the execution of Arabi, but I insisted that the death of Marshal Ney had not redounded to the credit of the Duke of Wellington, and that the Government of the U.S. had spared General Lee and Jeff Davis. Altogether I should be very glad of some indication of the line which you wish to be adopted on these topics as I am to be here till the 26th. . . .

"I think nothing can be better than what you said to the Queen," replied Gladstone. In answer to Har-

court's request for a lead Granville wrote (September 18) that :

. . . The three objects should be not to throw away the advantages we have gained, to avoid any just accusation of having abandoned our pledges, and to enlist the sympathies of the Egyptians with us and not against us. . . .

The Queen, however, persisted, and the day before Harcourt left Balmoral took the precaution of putting her views in a letter in which she said :

Queen Victoria to Harcourt.

Balmoral Castle, *September* 22.—The Queen feels very anxious for the future arrangements about Egypt, and hopes Sir Wm. Harcourt will impress *very strongly* on all his colleagues, the absolute necessity as well as importance of our holding a high tone, and (short of annexation) securing to ourselves such a position in Egypt as to secure our Indian Dominions and to maintain our superiority in the East, which is of the greatest importance for ourselves as much as for civilization in general !

The Queen was delighted to hear of the idea of a small representation of the Empress of India's troops being brought over to be presented to their Empress. She cannot forbear from observing how remarkable it is that so much of dear Lord Beaconsfield's *wise* policy (so attacked and reviled, she cannot conceal from Sir Wm. Harcourt) has been crowned with *signal* success : viz. the great use of Cyprus ; the employment of the Indian troops, and their being brought over to see their Queen Empress—which was only *not done* three or four years ago—as it was believed the Opposition would make such an outcry !

The days at Balmoral, however, were not wholly devoted to these high matters. Harcourt had a great capacity for enjoyment, and was happy at Court as in most places. His letters to his wife are full of high-spirited accounts of his doings and the doings of others. Thus he writes :

Harcourt to his Wife.

Balmoral Castle, *September* 18.— . . . We had prayers in the dining-room yesterday, as the Q. is driven away from church by the mob of tourists who come here to look at her through opera-glasses. She dined in private yesterday, being in much distress at the news of the fatal illness of the Dean of Windsor on whom she leans a good deal. I went afterwards to the Kirk with Lady Errol ; she is very pious and has undertaken my conversion. On the other

hand she is lively and talks whilst Lady Southampton never uttered. . . .

September 21.— . . . I shall be glad to return to the myrtles of the New Forest. . . . These royal circles are dull. . . .

BALMORAL CASTLE, *September* 19.— . . . Yesterday after luncheon just as I had got on my riding boots I was sent for by the Queen. I proposed to wait till I had put on more courtly attire, but was ordered at once into the *presence* to see the baby—so I went accoutred as I was and found the Q. and the Duchess of Connaught with baby which is a fine fat infant (weight 21 lbs.) with blue eyes and very solid arms. It was very amiable and I played with it some time. I have quite lost my heart to its mother—who is the dearest little woman I have seen for a long time.

At 4.30 I started off to ride to Fife's at Mar Lodge with Byng and Lord Errol—it is 26 miles there and back—Lord Errol, who is a very lively saint, leading at a hard gallop, and we did the distance in three hours. Fancy what a performance for me, especially as it was performed on a hill pony heavier and rougher than my own cob. Yet I am alive and no worse though I was rather achy last night. . . .

II

But these courtly duties were eating up the brief vacation and were diverting him from a new passion of place that had taken a strong hold on him. He had fallen in love with the New Forest, where he had taken Cufnells, near Lyndhurst, the home of Mrs. Hargreaves, Dean Liddell's daughter, the original of *Alice in Wonderland*. He had gone thither with his family on the rising of Parliament, and his letters to his friends resounded with praises of the Forest. "Don't be an odious snipe in the ooze of the Thames," he writes to Dilke, "but come down here at once and nurse Bobby." And to Bright, who had made some request of him, he writes:

LYNDHURST, *July* 30.—You may be sure that the fact of your wishing a thing is the strongest reason for my wishing to do it. And therefore as the gentleman said to Louis XIV, "If it is possible it is already done, if it is impossible it shall be done."

I write this from the heart of the New Forest on a delicious Sunday. We have taken a nice house here for the autumn, where I hope you will visit us in "a boundless contiguity of shade" where rumours of wars will not reach you.

If you do not know the country about here you will marvel that such a place could still exist in England.

Harcourt continued in occupation of Cufnells throughout the autumn, and among his visitors there were the Prime Minister and Mrs. Gladstone. Their brief stay was interrupted by a summons, which could not be denied, for the host and hostess to dine and sleep at Windsor. Lady Harcourt, in a letter (December 9) to her sister, Mrs. Sheridan, describes the formal proceedings at Windsor and their return the next afternoon to their guests. "It has been most interesting, Mr. Gladstone apparently very well and pouring out his mind on every subject in a way that makes me wish I had the pen of a ready writer to write it down and record it. . . . He seems equal to anything and I hope will long continue to lead the Party."

III

But apart from occasional flying visits, Harcourt had little time to cultivate his new-found pastime. An autumn session, together with his departmental duties, left him with small leisure. The session was chiefly concerned with the passing of the new rules of procedure, and the sharpening of the new instrument of the closure. On this subject Harcourt took a stronger view than some of his colleagues, and circulated a long memorandum (October 15) to the Cabinet insisting that it was "essential to secure to a majority the right to prevail which lies at the bottom of parliamentary institutions." Obstruction was a new feature in parliamentary life, which the old rules of the House did not contemplate. Its development required an emphatic assertion of the right of the majority:

To recognize in one-third or one-quarter of the House an absolute right . . . to postpone indefinitely the decision of a question is, in my judgment, to give a formal consecration to the principle of obstruction. . . . Why is it to be assumed that the minority will not abuse their *veto* when it is taken for granted that the majority will abuse their *clôture*. . . . I confess I am not convinced by Hartington's argument on the general policy of conciliation. I have no confidence in a millennium . . . in which the lion will lie down

with the lamb, and a little child will lead Lord Salisbury and Mr. Gladstone. . . .

He devoted a speech to his constituents at Derby on November 4 mainly to this subject. His view, which coincided with that of Gladstone except in regard to making the reforms a temporary expedient—a difference of opinion on which events declared themselves for Harcourt—prevailed. The need of the reforms was emphasized during the session itself, which was marked by the ebullience of the Fourth Party and the activities of Lord Randolph Churchill. Harcourt's letters to his wife at Cufnells at this time make frequent reference to the encounters between Churchill and " Staffy " (Northcote), of the latter of whom he always speaks with peculiar affection. In one episode of the struggle over the closure Harcourt came to grief. Henry Fowler, from the Liberal side, had proposed an amendment defining forty members as a " competent number " to demand an adjournment before public business began. Harcourt declared hostility to the amendment in the name of the Government, insisting that only a majority of the House should have this power ; but later in the day Hartington rose to say that Harcourt had been " misunderstood," and Gladstone himself practically conceded the Fowler suggestion.

As the year drew to a close the question of the reconstruction of the Ministry became pressing. Bright's place at the Duchy of Lancaster had not been filled, and Gladstone found it necessary to give up the Exchequer. Indeed, there had been hints of resignation. Writing to Spencer after Gladstone's visit to Cufnells, Harcourt says, apropos of the changes in the Ministry :

7, Grafton Street.— . . . Poor Gladstone has had a bad time of it this last fortnight, what between Windsor and the various claimants. I think both he and Granville overrate the value of the Derby adhesion. It will pacify some, but it will irritate more. For myself I am glad of it, as I have always liked Derby. I fear that as was inevitable in the new arrangements there are some ambitions unsatisfied. It is a bad thing to be Home Secretary, a worse thing to be Lord-Lieutenant, but worst of all to be Prime Minister. . . .

We have left our country home and returned to London. We closed our season with a visit from Gladstone, and I was happy to extract from him an assurance that he would not carry out his intention to retire at present.

But the vacancies had to be filled, and this was no easy matter. The difficulty centred chiefly in the case of Dilke. His claim to inclusion in the Cabinet was regarded as overwhelming; but the Queen still had no love for him, though the Prince of Wales and Prince Leopold, as Harcourt informed Gladstone from Balmoral, were very friendly to him. Chamberlain was naturally angry at the objections to Dilke. Writing to Harcourt, he said:

Chamberlain to Harcourt.

HIGHBURY, *December* 11.— . . . I am very glad to have your letter and to be rid of the nightmare of Mr. G.'s resignation. It must come some day, but the later the better. I can understand his alarm at redistribution, but why should he funk County Franchise? . . .

I wish he had spoken to the Q. about Dilke. It would never do to be left in the lurch with Derby in and Dilke out. The latter sweetens the former dose with many of us.

I do not myself believe in Lord Derby's influence. It is of the wrong sort with the best Liberals, and it is not enough to convert the Tories to the side of the Government, and it is another Peer!

Half the Cabinet in that effete institution!—to which some day you will be condemned and where you will pine and dwindle till you are as thin as Lulu. . . .

It was agreed that the vacancy in the Duchy of Lancaster was not suitable for Dilke's active genius for administration, and Chamberlain very handsomely offered to take the Duchy himself and make room for Dilke at the Board of Trade. To this sacrifice Harcourt entered an energetic protest, both to Gladstone and Granville. He spoke of Chamberlain's abilities and of his loyalty to the Government, said that he was making the sacrifice out of friendship and not because he desired it, and pointed out that, being dissatisfied with his new post, his activities would push him "to assert himself and his principles and to seek rather than avoid occasions of resignation." As a way out Harcourt suggested that Dodson should leave the Local Government Board

for the Duchy and be succeeded by Dilke. To Chamberlain Harcourt wrote:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

HOME OFFICE, *December* 17.— . . . Your generosity and self-sacrifice for the sake of Dilke is very great, but will surprise no one who knows you as well as I do. At the same time I am deeply dissatisfied with the arrangement. It will not be "understanded of the people," and will give rise to all sorts of misconstruction.

As regards the Queen herself it will lead to all kinds of comments which should be avoided. Besides I cannot bear the thought of your being relegated even for a time to a place altogether unworthy of your great powers and intellectual position. There is another arrangement which has occurred to me (and I understand also to you), viz. that Dodson should go to the Duchy, you to Local G. Board, and Dilke to B. of Trade. Everybody would understand this and there is a fitness about it that would commend it to the public judgment. . . .

I am very much disturbed in my mind about this business. I have so much regard for you that I cannot endure the idea that you should be made the victim in the business, and I confess I can hardly understand how anyone could accept the sacrifice you are prepared to make. . . .

To this Chamberlain replied:

Chamberlain to Harcourt.

HIGHBURY, *December* 18.—Your letter is very pleasant to me and I shall never forget the kindness you have shown at this time, nor the efforts you have made to spare me what will certainly be a most painful sacrifice.

Whatever may be ultimately decided, I am comforted to know how thoroughly I can count on your friendship and sympathy. . . .

In the end Harcourt's suggestion was adopted, and the final ministerial changes placed Childers at the Treasury, Hartington at the War Office, Derby at the Colonial Office, Kimberley at the India Office, Dilke at the Local Government Board, and Dodson at the Duchy of Lancaster.

Another ministerial matter occupied Harcourt's pen a good deal in the closing days of the year. Lord Rosebery had now been associated with him at the Home Office for eighteen months. The position had always been regarded as a misfit and a temporary expedient, and in practice had proved unsatisfactory. The relations between the two men,

judging from their correspondence, was thoroughly good humoured, and Harcourt had no more witty or amusing correspondent than his Under-Secretary.

But Lord Rosebery was not happy in his place nor happy about the management of Scottish business, and on December 23 Gladstone sent to Harcourt a correspondence which Rosebery had had with him and which had given "a great deal of trouble and worry at Hawarden." In replying to Gladstone, Harcourt recalled the attitude of Lord Rosebery when Carlingford was appointed to the Privy Seal; the circumstances in which, in spite of the obvious objection, he (Harcourt) consented to his appointment as Under-Secretary at the Home Office; the completeness with which he had surrendered all Scottish business to his hands and continued:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

. . . I am therefore reluctantly forced to the conclusion that the "wrongs of the Scotch nation" are not the real cause of the dissatisfaction which unhappily has developed itself. I deeply deplore it no less on public than on personal grounds, and I greatly sympathize in the annoyance which it must cause you at this moment. I should be very glad if I could in any way be of use in the matter, though I confess at this moment I do not see my way. I should always have been glad that R. should have had a seat in the Cabinet, but it is difficult to deal with such a demand made at the mouth of the pistol—and indeed at the present moment the H. of Lords is in advance of the H. of C. in the balance of power as the seats of Argyll, Forster and Bright are to be filled by two Peers and one Commoner. . . .

"Many thanks for your letter on the painful Rosebery correspondence," replied Gladstone (December 27). "The matter is I hope disposed of now—i.e. put aside at any rate for the present." That day Harcourt, who was spending his Christmas alone, wrote to Gladstone, stating that he had had a long conversation with Rosebery, and had "tendered some good advice which I could not well have written." He added:

. . . Rosebery has promised me he will go to Hawarden at an early day—which is far the best thing he can do. I who know your kindness for your youthful colleagues am well aware you will have

the robe and the ring and the fatted calf ready for him, and that the *mollia tempora fandi* will blot out the *litera scripta*.

"Rosebery will be most welcome here," replied Gladstone (December 28). "It is a most singular case of strong self-delusion: a vein of foreign matter which runs straight across a clear and vigorous intellect and a high-toned character." To Granville Harcourt wrote at length his views about Lord Rosebery's threat of resignation, and urged his strong claims to advancement, not merely on the grounds of his capacity but equally on the grounds of his influence in Scotland.

The relations between Harcourt and his Chief had become noticeably warmer for some time, and the allusions to Gladstone in Harcourt's letters began to have that note of personal affection which continued to mark his attitude to his leader to the end of their long association. The visit of Gladstone to Cufnells seems to have put the seal upon the new tendency. It is noticeable that about this time their correspondence tended to become more intimate and of wider range than formerly, passing easily from the discussion of affairs to the discussion of subjects that had arisen in conversation, from oysters (which Gladstone loathed and Harcourt loved) to the sea route of the Romans to Britain, or the character of "Soapy Sam." Writing to Gladstone, Harcourt says:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

HOME OFFICE, *December* 27.— . . . I think the last Vol. of Wilberforce's Memoirs must have satisfied even your charitable mind that I was not too harsh in the judgment I expressed at Cufnells—I knew him well from my boyhood and always thought him the most self-seeking, false and malignant of human beings, fawning when he hoped to gain, and venomous when he had nothing more to expect. Fancy the Queen reading his report of his conversation with the Dean of Windsor as to bishoprics. What amuses me is that I had heard it all almost in *ipsissimis verbis* from both the Bishop and Ld. Beaconsfield. He was indeed the ideal which a bitter *Dissenter* forms of a *Prelate* full of "envy, hatred, malice and all uncharitableness."

I hope you observe that you are going to place two more *Cam-*

bridge men in the Cabinet and a Cantab. also at Canterbury—Vive Cambridge ! !

But Gladstone was faithful to his old friend. "When we meet," he replied (December 28), "I will endeavour to run a tilt with you on behalf of Bishop Wilberforce; and I hope you will tell me, now or then, what was Beaconsfield's version of a most curious affair." In this amiable controversy we may leave the two statesmen in their mood of relaxation and gossip.

CHAPTER XXI

THE "HEAD DETECTIVE"

Mr. Gladstone's health—Phœnix Park trials—Local Government for Ireland—Harcourt's opposition—Protection for the Queen —Irish discussions in the House—Vengeance on Carey— Lightning passage of the Explosives Bill—Dynamite scares— Sunday Closing—London Government Bill—Difference with Mr. Gladstone on Metropolitan Police—Lord Rosebery's resignation—The Whewell Professorship—Holidays in the Highlands—Family bereavements—The new Speaker—The building of Malwood.

THE New Year opened unpromisingly for the Government. Gladstone's health was giving anxiety to his colleagues, and his continued sleeplessness rendered rest and change necessary. Writing to Ponsonby, and significantly underlining one word by way of hint for the Queen, Harcourt said:

HOME OFFICE, *January* 10, 1883.—The "grand old man" has had a bad time between all those who thought they ought to be in office and those who thought they (i.e. the others) ought not. I have myself been the depositary of many woes and have helped to anoint not a few sores. I don't gather that Gladstone is seriously ill, but want of sleep is unusual with him and always an ugly symptom with a hard-worked and aged brain. We have had great difficulty to prevent his bolting, and I do not feel that we are at all safe yet. There are some people I think who have not realized how much more uncomfortable things will be for *everybody* when he is gone. After all, he is the linch-pin of the coach. . . .

To Granville he was more outspoken. On January 17 he had been to Charing Cross to see Gladstone off to Cannes. He found him "worn and anxious," and his entourage more disturbed about his condition than they had yet been. "I fear his mind is more than ever turned towards

retirement," he said . . . "I trust Cannes may do much for him, but I confess I have great misgivings. The Q. and Rosebery have much to answer for."

They were not the only personal afflictions that Gladstone had to bear. Harcourt himself was often not a light load. The Queen herself seemed a little touched by the news. Harcourt had accompanied the Italian Ambassador on a visit to her at Osborne, and writing to Hartington (January 22) said:

> . . . I found H.M. at Osborne in high spirits and great good humour. I never saw her so chatty or disposed to talk at her ease, one sign of which was that she sat down during our interview which I had never seen before. I think she is touched by Gladstone's illness and that her heart is softened towards him. . . .

In the absence of the Prime Minister the preparations for the new Session were held up. Gladstone's own mind was still directed towards the pacification of Ireland. At Charing Cross he had said to Harcourt, "I must have a Local Government Bill for Ireland." "I made no remark on this," Harcourt told Granville, "because I quite agree with Hartington and Spencer that it is most impolitic to contract this year to so thorny a subject in the present condition of Ireland." But what was to be the programme? "I have of course my London Bill, which is a big suet pudding, as a stodgy *pièce de résistance*. But man cannot live on such food alone. *In my opinion we ought not to touch Ireland at all.* But we must have at least one political measure from a Party point of view. I can see none but either Liquor or County Franchise." He proceeded:

> . . . The Derbys and H. Bismarck dined with us last night. Derby seems placid and content, but abnormally silent and dull. I think he is infected by her dreariness which is doleful beyond description. The failure of her eyesight oppresses her, and she keeps him tied to her apron strings in a most cheerless domestic circle of one. His logical mind is disquieted by the fact that we have as yet settled no programme of measures for the Session. . . .

Granville, replying to Harcourt, said he had seen Glad-

stone off at Dover, and took a more cheerful view of his condition :

> . . . I cannot help being a little doubtful about the extent of the sleeplessness. A really good sleeper always exaggerates the number of hours he is awake, if it happens to him at all. I was cured of the belief that I did not sleep at all by moving to Carlton Terrace, and finding that I only heard Big Ben once or twice in the night. . . .

So far as the programme of the session was concerned, he told Harcourt that he shared Gladstone's view as to an Irish Local Government measure.

But a few days before an event had happened which was destined largely to shape the political activities of the year. A police raid in Dublin on January 13 resulted in the capture of seventeen persons, who were at once charged with conspiracy to murder certain Government officials and other persons. They were arrested on evidence procured by the special powers given by the Crimes Act. Three more arrests were made three days later. When the prisoners were brought into court on January 20, it was stated that one of their number, Robert Farrell, had turned informer. Farrell described the inner circle of the Fenian organization charged especially with murder, and gave details of the plot which had been directed against Mr. Forster. On February 10 Michael Kavanagh, the car-driver who had driven off with the murderers on the day of the Phœnix Park crime, also turned informer, and declared that Carey gave the signal for the murder. Carey was a town councillor, and was a member of the secret society, the Invincibles, who acted under the direction of the mysterious No. 1. This man now turned informer to save his own life, and the full details of the plot were revealed.

Meanwhile, however, there had been a hot struggle behind the scenes over the Local Government Bill for Ireland. Gladstone was still at Cannes, and the programme for the year was unsettled. "I am terribly hard at work on the London Bill," wrote Harcourt in a letter to his son, who was wintering in Madeira, "and am in better heart about

it and am beginning more to believe in its possible success. Dilke, Chamberlain and other good judges are well pleased with it. If I get through it with credit I shall consider I have done a good job and accomplished my full share of the programme." The approval of Chamberlain had, however, only been won after a struggle. There had been much discussion and correspondence between the two on the character of the New London which the Bill was to establish. Harcourt was for one London, with the City Corporation, reformed and popularly elected, operating over the whole metropolitan area. Chamberlain was hostile to enhancing the authority of the City Corporation, and favoured a central City Council, with borough councils elected at the same time. In the end, however, he approved of Harcourt's Bill, which he said would strike the imagination as a great scheme.

The prospects of the Bill, however, were clouded. Gladstone, though absent, was determined that the reform of Irish local government should be attacked, and wrote strongly to that effect to his colleagues. "The argument that we cannot yet trust Irishmen with popular local institutions," he wrote to Granville (January 22), "is the mischievous argument by which the Conservative Opposition to the Melbourne Government resisted, and finally crippled, the reform of municipal corporations in Ireland." [1] He took strong exception to the tone of Hartington's speeches in Lancashire on Irish government, and a grave breach in the Cabinet seemed imminent. "From your account," wrote Hartington to Harcourt (February 3), "I think that Granville appears to be about the only supporter Mr. G. is likely to have in his wish to hand over the Government of Ireland to the Fenians." Spencer, after being disposed to support Gladstone, had altered his mind, holding that a good Bill was impossible and a bad Bill useless. Mr. Trevelyan, however, still favoured a Bill. Harcourt was tireless in hostility. Writing to Spencer, he said:

[1] Lord Morley, *Life of Gladstone* (App. to vol. iii.).

Harcourt to Spencer.

January 29.— . . . To create local bodies of a representative character in Ireland just now seems to me little short of madness. It is like handing revolvers to the Dublin assassins, thinking that by "placing confidence" in them you will induce them to behave well. It is a miserable delusion. Whatever power of this kind is given will only be a new weapon which will be turned without remorse against the English Government. Gladstone still cherishes the illusion that the *feeling* of the people is changed, and that Parnell is really converted. But the leopard has not changed his spots. And the Mallow election shows what is the real feeling of the people. . . .

He admitted that Gladstone's frame of mind on the subject was very serious and that he would make a great fight for it, but the majority of the Cabinet would be against him, and he (Harcourt) implored Spencer to "stand firm." Two days later he repeats the appeal. "Hartington, Northbrook, and I are all staunch, and shall not swerve." He added, "O'Donovan Rossa has so long sworn to take my life that I have almost ceased to believe in him. Nevertheless I take precautions, and see that Hartington is protected." The kind of precautions he took are indicated in a letter to his son (February 8) in which he says:

. . . We stayed at Richmond Saturday and Sunday, and there is a violent controversy going on in the papers as to whether the house at Richmond was or was not surrounded by detectives. The crowds of these retainers by whom we are attended is necessary. I went to meet Spencer and Granville at Devonshire House the other day, and I think there were six of them in the hall. . . .

Chamberlain's attitude meanwhile gave Spencer concern. "I almost fear the way is being paved for a new Party on Gladstone's retirement," he wrote to Harcourt, "and that J. C. will try and split us up on the two subjects of (Free) Education and Ireland." Harcourt told Spencer not to be alarmed about "J. C.," who had "a much cooler head than J. Morley," and must not be charged with the "follies" of the latter in the *Pall Mall.* "I am much more afraid of *Jupiter hostis* at Cannes on the subject of Local Government," he added.

But the danger of a breach in the Cabinet was dissipated

by the course of events in Ireland and America, which finally disposed of Gladstone's hopes of carrying a measure of conciliation that Session. The revelation of Carey, the informer, created an entirely new atmosphere inimical to pacific legislation. Spencer had accepted his evidence with repugnance, and Gladstone, though he argued that it must be received, said, "Still, one would have heard the hiss from the dock with sympathy." Harcourt was urgent that it should be received, even though it meant that the wretch escaped the hangman.

. . . The great importance (he wrote to Spencer) of getting a man in his position to avow publicly his own villainy in the face of the world and betray those he has seduced will have so great an effect in sowing alarm and distrust throughout the whole conspiracy, in which no man will feel safe hereafter, that it is worth almost any sacrifice to obtain it. The existence of informers is the best method of intimidation we possess against these villains. . . .

From Windsor, as the terrible story was revealed, there came almost daily notes from the Queen to Harcourt, of which this is typical:

Windsor Castle, *February* 20.— . . . Will not Mr. Gladstone be dreadfully shaken by all these disclosures, as he never would believe in any connection between this Land League and the Fenians? The Queen thinks Sir Wm. Harcourt and Lord Spencer judged right in accepting the evidence of Carey—but he is a villain who has instigated so much of the whole, and will cause the death of many —and she hopes that he will be *severely punished*. . . .

Harcourt had now almost succeeded to Disraeli's place in the Queen's admiration. After a visit to Windsor at this time he wrote to his son, "I should blush to write the civil things that Lady Ely says the Queen is always saying of me." And he on his part spared no pains to relieve her of alarm. In reply to her inquiry about the safety of a visit to London, he assures her (February 26) that the police are satisfied there is no risk of danger, but adds:

. . . If Sir William by a *personal* attendance on Your Majesty when in transit from place to place could give Your Majesty any further sense of security he would be most glad of Your Majesty's permission to attend when Your Majesty moves. . . .

Occasionally Harcourt's alarm about the Queen's safety seemed to the Queen herself alarming. Thus, on March 5 she inquired why Sir E. Henderson, the Chief of Police, rode with her carriage from Buckingham Palace. Finding there was no special ground for concern, she observed, "point de zèle." Harcourt replied to Ponsonby that he had every reason to believe that extraordinary precautions should be adopted:

Harcourt to Ponsonby.

. . . But whether it was her wish or not it was a thing I thought ought to be done, and therefore I did it. I was attacked yesterday in Downing Street for the police protection I insist on for Mr. Gladstone. I am very sorry to displease both my mistress and my master. But until I receive my month's warning, like a faithful domestic I shall do what I think best for the establishment. It is foolish to expect any gratitude for all the trouble one takes for other people—for one is not likely to get it. But it is a little embarrassing to be constantly worried first of all to do a great deal which is unnecessary, and then to be blamed for doing what is prudent. If you want a horse to carry you over such a stiff country as we are now hunting you must give him his head and sit firm, and not be always nagging at his mouth and checking his head just as he is about to take his fences. I must endure the reproach of having protected the Queen too much, but I shall not face the blame of having protected her too little. Because the last would be a just and the first is an unjust censure.

A few days later he had his revenge. The cock-and-bull story of an attack by armed men on Lady Florence Dixie near Windsor Castle created great panic in the royal circle, and Harcourt was deluged with inquiries. He discredited the story from the first and was soon able to convince the Court that it was a pure invention.

II

Meanwhile every day was adding to the magnitude of the disclosures in Dublin, and Spencer was now sending Harcourt a warning to "take care of Hartington" and of himself, and now a new list of supposed criminals—Byrne and Walsh, who had escaped to France, and Sheridan, who was in America. There followed prolonged attempts to secure their

extradition ; but these failed for lack of proof. The nervous tension that prevailed in all circles at this time is illustrated by the following passage in a letter from Harcourt to Spencer :

February 18.— . . . I will tell you a very extraordinary thing. Herbert Gladstone came in here (Home Office) just now saying that Justin McCarthy and Barry had been to him in great terror assuring him that F. Byrne (who is secretary of their association) went to Cannes a fortnight ago on the ground of ill-health, and imploring Herbert to take *precautions for his father's life against their own secretary.* Byrne, I am told, and Parnell occupy adjoining rooms in the same office in Victoria St. and are always together. . . .

In Parliament the debate on the Address turned largely upon the Irish revelations, and the Government were fiercely attacked (February 20), especially by John Gorst, for changing their policy from remedial legislation to coercion and for the Kilmainham negotiations, which were alleged to have been carried on behind Forster's back. Gorst particularly attacked Harcourt for having denied knowledge of the notorious Sheridan, and for having said in his " usual exaggerated and random way " that he would accept assistance from everybody in the cause of law and order in Ireland. Harcourt's reply disposed in a good-tempered way of the allegation that he was an incompetent Home Secretary because he had not been aware of the complete history of Sheridan. As to the Kilmainham negotiations, he repudiated the suggestion that they had been carried on without Forster's knowledge.

. . . Sir, there was no communication made to the prisoners in Kilmainham except with the full knowledge, aye, and under the actual direction of my Rt. Hon. Friend the member for Bradford.

Forster was the principal party to those communications. It was nonsense to say that the Government should not have accepted the assurances of the suspects. Forster was as willing as they to accept them. The difference between them was as to whether those assurances were sufficient. He concluded by saying that the Opposition should either condemn the policy of the Government in Ireland or support

it. The most injurious thing they could do was to keep in office a Government, especially the Government in Ireland, which they were labouring in every way to weaken and to discredit.

On the previous day there had been an informal Cabinet which Dilke records in his diary [1] as follows :

. . . Harcourt fought against Lord Granville, Kimberley, Northbrook, Carlingford, and Childers, in favour of his violent views about the Irish. At last Carlingford, although an Irish landlord, cried out : " Your language is that of the lowest Tory." Harcourt then said, " In the course of this very debate I shall say that there must be no more Irish legislation, and no more conciliation, and that Ireland can only be governed by the sword." " If you say that," replied Carlingford, " it will not be as representing the Government, for none of your colleagues agree with you." It was only temper, and Harcourt said nothing of the kind, but made an excellent speech [that in reply to Gorst].

To Spencer Harcourt wrote with great indignation (February 25) about " the disgraceful bear-fight " that was going on in Parliament, in which the Tories were far more anxious to damage us than to put down murder.

Harcourt to Spencer.

As Bright says, " They dislike assassins much, but the Government more. . . ." Of course we decided at the Cabinet yesterday to put our foot down firm and refuse not only a committee, but a day for its discussion on the Kilmainham transaction.

. . . Forster, I think, meant to do as much harm as he dared and could, and the Party are very wroth with him. The more this matter is understood it is perceived that he resigned not because he was not to be supported, but because a Chief was to be put over him.

Chamberlain made an admirable speech at the close of the debate. It was a difficult position for him, but he acquitted himself as well as possible, and did himself and the Party much good.

Parnell's speech, though detestable, was well conceived from his point of view. He had no wish to stand well with the House of Commons or England, but he spoke to Ireland, and posed as a man who would admit nothing, apologize for nothing, and give up no one—which is just what the Irish admire. . . . It is a mercy, I think, that we have had the Irish business out before the return from Cannes, which is to be next Thursday. . . .

[1] *Life*, ii. 520.

The trials of the prisoners began in April. Brady, Curley, Fagan, and Kelly were found guilty, and were sentenced to death. Caffrey and Delaney pleaded guilty, and were sentenced to death. Delaney's sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. The five others were hanged. Two more were sentenced to penal servitude for life, and the rest of the prisoners were sentenced to various periods of penal servitude.

Carey's evidence did not implicate the Land League in the crimes of the Invincibles, but some members of it were involved. The *Annual Register* of the year, in commenting on the revelations, says that the evidence clearly showed that the murder of Lord Frederick was not decreed. The assassins were out to murder Mr. Burke, having failed to kill Mr. Forster, and did not even know who his companion was. "It reads," says the writer, "like the grimmest of satires on Mr. Forster's term of office to know that at a time when the gaols were choking with the number of his 'suspects,' when, according to his own belief, he had every dangerous man in the Island under lock and key, his own life was in incessant danger at the hands of men of whose existence he was guilelessly unaware."

James Carey did not escape. He was kept in Kilmainham for some time, and then took ship to South Africa. But he was shot on board the boat by a man named O'Donnell, who was brought home for trial and condemned to death. The American Government, on the plea that O'Donnell might be an American subject, asked for time and special consideration of his case in a very remarkable diplomatic document. Charles Russell took up the case, and Victor Hugo appealed to the Queen to "spare O'Donnell and earn the praise of the world." Harcourt stated his reasons for declining to intervene in a long memorandum to Gladstone (December 12), and in acknowledging his Chief's "kind and considerate" reply said:

> . . . It is on these occasions that your lieutenants have occasion to be grateful for the strong arm with which their Chief always sustains them when they are right and helps them when they are wrong.

O'Donnell was executed a few days later. While the public mind was filled with the Dublin disclosures, another series of incidents occurred which created widespread panic. Writing to Spencer on March 10, Harcourt said:

> You will have heard by this time of the first act of retaliation in London. I was at dinner in the House of Commons when we heard a loud report. Several of them at the table said, "It is an explosion." I rejoined, "I have heard so much of explosions, I have almost ceased to believe in them." In about quarter-of-an-hour the office-keeper of the Home Office came over with the news. It is quite clear what happened. . . .

III

All this was the beginning of a campaign of outrage that lasted throughout the summer and spread to all parts of the country. It inflamed Harcourt's combustible mind to irresistible activity. Already events had absorbed him on the police side of the Home Office to the exclusion of almost everything else. He was still going on with his London Municipality Bill, taking his share in the general parliamentary battle over the Bradlaugh case and other questions that arose, receiving deputations on London government, the exactions of the water companies, and so on. But his mind was filled with the Terror and the measures for combating it. He induced the Cabinet to transfer a larger part of the ordinary business of his Office to Dilke at the Local Government Board, in order to leave him free for the battle. "I noted," comments Dilke, "that Harcourt thought himself a Fouché, and wanted to have the whole police work of the country, and nothing but police." With the arrest of the dynamite-plotters on April 5 he wrote an urgent letter to Gladstone insisting on immediate legislation to deal with explosives. The facts had revealed an alarming organization for the manufacture and use of nitro-glycerine in this country, and there was damning evidence of the connection of the organization with the Fenian Brotherhood in America. "There can be no doubt that we are in the midst of a large and well-organized and fully equipped band who are prepared to commit outrages all over the country

on an immense scale," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone. The latter yielded to his imperious demand for authority to rush a Bill for preventive measures. "The most panic-stricken," commented the *Annual Register*, "were somewhat taken aback by the headlong zeal of Sir William Harcourt to protect society at the expense of parliamentary procedure."

His impetuosity anticipated the experience of August 1914. He introduced his Explosives Bill on April 9, and in the space of about an hour and a half it had been put through its three readings and was sent up to the House of Lords, where the same astonishing haste was continued. In bringing in the Bill Harcourt dwelt on the grave and imminent peril to society. He paid a tribute to the diligence and skill of the police, and explained the necessity of strengthening the law of 1875. For the sake of the "moral effect" Harcourt had set his heart on getting the Royal Assent that same night, and at Windsor the Queen was waiting up to give it, but the officials at the Crown Office charged with the arrangements for the commission to go down by special train to Windsor had gone home, and the scheme broke down. Harcourt, "boiling with indignation" as he said, wrote to Granville a furious letter on the "miserable sinecurists" who defeated Parliament and affronted Majesty:

> . . . We have pledged ourselves to Rylands and Economy, and I think we cannot do better than begin with the Clerk to the Crown, which is a splendid example of the old English sinecure where a man is appointed at a high salary with very little to do, who gets a deputy appointed at a somewhat lower salary to whom he transfers his business and who in his turn does nothing at all.

Turning aside from these exciting occupations, we find Harcourt writing to Gladstone (April 26) to urge the support by the Government of Wilfrid Lawson's Local Option motion. He was now thoroughly converted to this method of dealing with the drink question. He indicated his own argument on the subject, and asked Gladstone whether he might put it forward on behalf of

the Government instead of as a personal view. The resolution did not commit them to the principle of a *plébiscite* on liquor, but favoured the control being in the hands of the same representative body which is charged with the administration of local affairs. "I feel sure that if we do not give Lawson a substantial support there will be great dissatisfaction in the Party." He ended with a tribute to Gladstone's speech two nights before on the Affirmation Bill:

> . . . I cannot write to you to-night without expressing to you the gratitude and admiration with which I am still inspired under the influence of the noblest effort of human oratory which my memory can recall either in written or spoken words.

Gladstone replied thanking Harcourt for his kind words about "my rather Alexandrian speech last night," but he would only admit that it contained one fine passage, the allusion being to a quotation from Lucretius. He added:

> . . . Your instincts of kindliness in all personal matters are known to all the world. I should be glad, on selfish grounds, if I could feel sure that they had not a little warped your judicial faculty for the moment.

Harcourt's suggestion that in supporting the Local Option resolution he should speak for the Government was agreed to. Commenting on his speech in the House on April 27, *The Times* said it had put the question on an entirely new basis. "Local option in some form will be granted; the time and manner alone remain to be determined." Harcourt's advocacy of the local control of the liquor question also expressed itself in a speech on May 24 to a deputation from various counties which were promoting Sunday Closing Bills, and a few days later (May 30) he spoke in support of the Bills in the House.

In the meantime the trial of the dynamite conspirators was proceeding, and on its conclusion, which resulted in Dr. Gallagher, Whitehead, Wilson, and Curtin being sentenced to penal servitude for life, Harcourt wrote to Spencer:

> Home Office, *June* 14.— . . . All the information that reaches

me is that the neck of the business is broken so far as violence is concerned in Ireland and Great Britain. But the perpetual reserve of crime in America and the sally-port they have there prevent our eradicating the roots of the mischief, and I do not feel as if things were ever really safe so long as these horrid ruffians can safely come to and fro. . . .

IV

But although the " neck of the business " had been broken by Harcourt's energetic action, there continued sporadic outbreaks throughout the year, explosions at Glasgow and elsewhere, captures of explosives at Westminster, arrests and trials, incidents and alarms of varying gravity. The crisis, however, had passed, and the police activities of Harcourt became less absorbing. It was this preoccupation, however, that was largely responsible for the most serious disagreement he had with Gladstone. Harcourt, as we have seen, had been engaged on a Bill for the reform of London government. When on February 3 Ritchie had pressed him in the House of Commons to deal with the London Water Supply, Harcourt declared that the ratepayers should make their own bargain. He held that it would be nearly as much trouble to tackle the water supply of London as to create a new government for London, and those who opposed his Municipality Bill were really the people responsible for holding up the water arrangements.

His intentions were indicated in a clearly inspired article in *The Times* just before the opening of Parliament. The existing Corporation, reformed and elected on a direct basis, was to be the governing body of the whole metropolis. The metropolitan area was to be a county by itself for general judicial and financial purposes, with its own magistrates, etc., but the police were to remain under the Home Office.

It was on this last proposal that the conflict arose which prevented the production of the Bill. In a memorandum which he circulated to the Cabinet, Harcourt insisted that the Home Office must retain control of the London police on account of the danger of a Fenian outbreak. In such

a case action could not be delayed to await the decision of the London Watch Committee. "To this language"—says Dilke, commenting on what he called "the violent and anti-popular language" of the memorandum—"neither Mr. Gladstone nor Chamberlain nor I yielded." From Cannes Gladstone wrote to Granville strongly insisting on the municipal control of the police, and Harcourt replied protesting that in his original memorandum in December 1881 he had taken the contrary view, that he had had no reason to suppose it was objected to, and that he had proceeded with his plans on that assumption. To Spencer he wrote (March 4) that if Gladstone's proposal were insisted on he would have no course but resignation. With the return of Gladstone from Cannes the conflict became critical. If the Bill was to be produced it must be put in the forefront of the programme. The London members were clamorous, and the London public, angry at the extortions of the water companies, was becoming impatient of delay. Harcourt was naturally anxious to produce his Bill, but he would not yield on the police question. Writing to Gladstone, he says:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

HOME DEPARTMENT, *March* 23, 1883.— . . . Unless we are agreed amongst ourselves upon this there is no use thinking of the introduction of the London Bill. I am sure that you will believe me when I say that nothing could be more repugnant to my feelings than that under any circumstances I should be placed in an attitude of opposition to opinions which you strongly entertain. . . . I do not write, however, to argue that question now, as I think all has been said upon it pretty nearly that has to be said. What I wished to express to you was my strong desire to avoid by all means any appearance of conflict or even of controversy with you, whose heavy burthen I desire to lighten and not to increase. And therefore if, as I fear, it is not likely that your opinion on this subject will be changed I see no better road out of the difficulty than to abandon the Bill. . . .

Gladstone was as uncompromising as Harcourt, who in a second letter insisted that "a popular body was altogether unfit to conduct such a machinery" as the police, concluding, "I fear you will consider my heresies so gross

and my creed so heterodox that I am past salvation. If so there is nothing for it but to 'ride for a fall' (as the hunting men say)—a fall either of the *Bill* or of its *author*." Gladstone wanted neither, and suggested as a way out that the City police should remain in the hands of the new municipality and that the rest of the metropolitan force should still be under the control of the Home Office. Harcourt was unmoved. "Your letter," he replied, "convinces me more than ever that the Bill cannot go on—at least in my hands." Gladstone was still persuasive. Let the Bill be produced with an open mind on the disputed point. "I fear that the ram you have provided in the thicket in the shape of postponement will not save my Isaac from the sacrificial knife," replied Harcourt (April 6), and he insisted that if he was to father the Bill the whole metropolitan police must be in the hands of the Home Office. A few days later he formally intimated to Gladstone that he could not go on with the Bill, offering as his official reason the strain of dealing with the Fenian conspiracy here and in America, which made it impossible to pilot a difficult measure through the House:

> . . . Every available moment of my time which I can spare from the regular routine of my office (which is multifarious enough), I have to devote to this subject. I want time to think of it as well as to act in it. And I feel that if I am to do justice to the requirement of this case I must give up my whole time to it. I have indeed for the last few weeks had necessarily to be my own Chief of Police. . . .

The conflict continued in innumerable letters, brief on Gladstone's side, lengthy on Harcourt's. Gladstone (now at Hawarden) suggested (May 14) as a compromise the prolongation of the present powers for five years and "until Parliament shall otherwise provide," but Harcourt resisted all evasions of the issue. He was "*very* sorry to appear so obstinate," but he was immovable. Fenianism filled his mind with fears. To this letter Gladstone replied at length, ignoring the question of merit ("as to which I take it we are both past praying for"), and arguing with Harcourt on the expediency of the measure, its practicability,

and the limits of Cabinet unity on a detail of a measure. "I must say," he said, "that I think the conditions you lay down as to unity of opinion are such as would go far to render co-operation of independent minds in the Cabinet impracticable." He declined to treat Fenian plots "as a permanent institution of the country" which should govern not merely present action, but action five years hence. He suggested that Harcourt should meet his colleagues, a course which was followed, Harcourt reporting that they agreed that the Bill should be proceeded with. "As to the police question, we were all of opinion that the Bill should be promoted in its present shape without alteration." "I thank you for your letter, though it sorely disappoints me," replied Gladstone (May 24). "You do not say whether the Ministers you assembled read my letter from Hawarden? Or heard it? If not, I will send it them." A few days later at a full Cabinet the police difficulty, in Dilke's phrase, "finally slew the Bill."

V

While this struggle was going on between Harcourt and his Chief, an official relationship in his own department was in process of dissolution. The appointment of Lord Rosebery as Under-Secretary at the Home Office had not been a happy experiment. It did not offer a suitable field for the exercise of Lord Rosebery's gifts, and it removed the Under-Secretary from the House of Commons where he was chiefly needed. Harcourt agreed to the arrangement as a temporary expedient for including the brilliant young Scottish peer in the Ministry, but the appointment had been prolonged beyond expectation. The control of the Scottish business of the Home Office had been committed to Lord Rosebery's hand, but he was dissatisfied with the administration of Scottish affairs as an incident of the Home Office, and pressed for a Local Government Board of Scotland. In this he was supported by Harcourt, who, in replying (May 4) to a memorandum of Gladstone's putting forward four alternative proposals for dealing with Scottish

affairs, strongly advocated a new department under a privy councillor. In the course of his letter he said, referring to this scheme:

> . . . It is the only one which will avert Rosebery's resignation, and if Rosebery resigns the whole question will become unmanageable and pass out of our hands. I regard the loss of R. as a very serious matter not only from a personal point of view which you I know would feel as I do. But I think in the present state of the Party it would have a most mischievous effect in the most loyal of all our battalions, the Scotch contingent. There is no doubt that he is much looked up to in Scotland, and the idea that he had suffered in their cause would produce the worst impression. . . .

But the long-threatened resignation was not avoided. There was a Home Office debate in the House of Commons on May 31, and the next day Lord Rosebery wrote to Gladstone saying that after that discussion as to the undesirableness of the Under-Secretaryship of the Home Department being held by a peer, he could no longer hold the office. A statement was made in the *Standard* that the resignation was due to personal disagreements between Harcourt and Lord Rosebery, and Harcourt suggested to Lord Rosebery that a denial of the suggestion should be sent to the newspapers. Lord Rosebery was against writing to the newspapers, but advised a question in the House of Commons on the subject, which would enable Harcourt to dispose of the suggestion of personal disagreement. The question was duly asked on June 7, and answered in this sense. J. T. Hibbert was appointed to succeed Lord Rosebery, and a Local Government Board (Scotland) Bill, was brought in on June 29, but got no further than its second reading. Real progress was delayed until 1885, but the fall of the Government prevented legislation for Scotland, which was once more deferred.

At this time Harcourt still retained the Chair of International Law at Cambridge, although since holding office he had ceased to lecture. As some dissatisfaction was expressed on the subject, he appointed T. J. Lawrence of Downing College as his deputy, but his attachment to Cambridge and his rooms in Neville's Court at Trinity was

too strong to permit him to break the connection altogether. He had discovered in the rooms some fine Queen Anne panelling, covered by layers of canvas, paint and wall-paper. He restored the panelling and put in fine ceilings with the Harcourt and Vernon arms and crests. When the Prince of Wales's eldest son went to Cambridge Harcourt offered his rooms for his use ; but the floor above had been taken for him, and the Harcourt rooms were used instead for the Prince of Wales on the occasion of his visits to his son. The rooms, left as Harcourt restored them, are now used as the College guest rooms.

In the midst of the alarms and excursions of these summer days Harcourt was able to snatch occasional distractions. Writing to his son, he says :

Harcourt to his Son.

July 18.— . . . Did I tell you that Donald Currie lent me his big yacht (600 tons) from Friday to Monday last with leave to ask six friends. I had settled it all and we were going to have a fine cruise to the Channel Islands, when I was summoned on Saturday morning by telegraph to dine and sleep at Windsor that night ! Pretty short notice ! So I had to put all off, but bolted off early on Sunday morning to Southampton, and went to sea for the night by myself sailing westwards. It is a splendid vessel about three times as big as the *Fingall*, beautifully fitted, crew twenty-six men, speed twelve miles. In the morning when I was going to breakfast the skipper told me the *Palatine* (Wolverton's yacht) was in sight, so I signalled " personal communication is desired," and W. sent off Bob Duff (the Whip) in a boat which conveyed me to breakfast on board the *Palatine*, and so we sailed in company up to Portsmouth and back by train to London. I got twenty hours of good sea air and enjoyed it. I think her Ladyship and I shall go a cruise with Wolverton next Saturday.

There is an invite for you to the P. of Wales's garden party on Thursday next, but I suppose you will prefer salmon.

There is " the devil to pay and no pitch hot " over Suez Canal, but I think we shall wriggle out of it though not without eating a good deal of dirt. At one time it looked as if it was all U.P.

The allusion to the Suez Canal had reference to the critical situation in regard to a rival scheme, in regard to which Harcourt at this time wrote a letter to Gladstone dealing with the position of the Egyptian Government

and the claim of Lesseps to exclusive monopoly rights. Two days later Harcourt writes again to his son :

. . . Lily (Lady Harcourt) and I had good fun at the Fisheries Bazaar where the P. and Princess of Wales and the rest of the royal family sold strawberries and roses for £1 a piece. All the world and his wife were there, and we amused ourselves much. I however spent the fortune of my children there, and so you will have to live on bread and water hereafter. Lily and I go to-morrow for a yachting lark with Ld. Wolverton in the *Palatine* till Monday. . . .

With the rising of Parliament Harcourt took his customary flight to the North. He anticipated his visit to his familiar haunts in Skye, as he told Gladstone, with some concern, for that island had been the scene of great disturbance among the crofters. "It is the fault of the silly lairds who have brought it to this," he had written to his son in Madeira. On a small scale it was the Irish land question again with evictions, no rent and all the rest of the symptoms of agrarian discontents. The trouble ended in the despatch of the *Jackal* with marines to the island and the surrender of the ringleaders of the attack on the police and sentences at Edinburgh which, fortunately for his reputation in Skye, Harcourt had got reduced before his arrival there. In spite of this cloud on the horizon, Harcourt looked forward to his tour with eagerness. "We go to Oban to-night," he wrote to Spencer (September 10), "where I expect to meet the Prime Minister. When I once get on board my yacht I think I shall steam away into space and not come back again." But his anticipations suffered a common fate. A week later he was back at the Home Office writing to the Queen of the great grief which had overtaken him by the death of his "beloved sister, Lady Morshead," and the Queen wrote in reply :

"Sir William Harcourt only does her justice in saying she feels with and for others in their sorrows and bereavements, for she does so most truly. . . . The tearing and rending asunder of ties of the tenderest affection and friendship is terrible to endure. The heart-sickness and yearning

"For the touch of a vanished hand
And the sound of a voice that is still"

is agonizing. The only comfort is in the thought of that Eternal Home where there will be no more partings, and in the support of Him who has seen fit to chasten us. . . .

Harcourt returned to the Hebrides, but domestic affliction pursued him, and writing from Loch Alsh to Gladstone, who had invited him and Lady Harcourt to Hawarden, he said:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

Loch Alsh, *October* 21.— . . . I cannot say anything at present about public meetings. Death has been busy with our race. The death of a beloved sister has been a great blow to me. And yesterday I received the intelligence of my Uncle Egerton Harcourt's death. He was well stricken in years, but he is the last of the Archbishop's ten sons and was always a kind and true friend to us all, and the break-up of all associations is saddening. . . .

I shall be glad to get South, for I have been and am very anxious about my poor brother who has been lying for some weeks in great danger from a sort of typhoid fever which he caught at Cowes. He has now, I am glad to say, been moved to Nuneham, and I hope now is on the road to recovery, but he has been in imminent danger. I had meant to rest on my road South at Birnam with Millais, when I was to have shot capercailzie with the Attorney-General, and should have heard all your secrets by anticipation, but domestic trouble makes me hurry home.

The affectionate relations between the two brothers at this time are shown in a letter written by the invalid from Cowes on October 9, in which, after a full account of the state of his health, he says, "I wish you at the end of my four weeks here in bed to know what my feelings are, as my best friend in the world."

The question of the Speakership was again the subject of speculation, and Harcourt's name having been mentioned in the newspapers in connection with it, Lewis Harcourt, who was at Hawarden, informed his father that Mrs. Gladstone had ridiculed the reports, saying "as if it was likely that any man of your father's age and powers of speaking (without taking into consideration his administrative abilities) would be likely to go into a voluntary retirement of that kind." "She suddenly asked me," he continued, "whether you would like to be Lord

Chancellor, and though I could honestly have said I did not know, I thought we were getting on rather delicate ground, so broke off the conversation."

Meanwhile the dynamite alarms had revived under the stimulus of explosions in the Underground railway in London, and Harcourt, writing to his son at Hawarden (November 1), said, "You may tell Mr. Gladstone that we are all of the opinion that things were never worse than they are now in respect of the anticipation of outrage and crime. . . . I went with Lily to the hospital to-day to see the sufferers. . . . It is amazing how the carriages could be (as they were) blown to pieces with so little injury to the passengers." Of his anxieties at this time there is a glimpse in a letter to Ponsonby:

Harcourt to Ponsonby.

HOME OFFICE, *November* 21.— . . . I was very glad to get news this morning of H.M.'s safe arrival. I had one of the usual scares last night about your journey. (Police Inspector) Williamson at 12.30 a.m. came in with a letter fresh from the U.S. describing the machine with which and the manner in which you were to be blown up on your way from Balmoral. As Hartington and the Attorney-General were sitting with me we consulted what to do on this agreeable intelligence, but as you were already supposed to be half-way through your journey it was not easy to know what course to take. However I sent Williamson to Euston and Paddington to direct that an additional pilot engine should be run at a longer interval in front of you as soon as possible, as the intelligence pointed to bombs to be deposited *after the passage* of the ordinary pilot engine. I presume this was done but I daresay you were not conscious of it. I thought if there was any danger at all it would be in the neighbourhood of Preston and of Birmingham. I had police at Euston and Birmingham to report to me all night how you were getting on, and was proportionately relieved when I heard you were safe and sound at Windsor. . . .

Happily Majesty, as Ponsonby duly reported, slept through the journey undisturbed by the alarms which kept her faithful knight awake to receive the reports of her progress.

During this year Harcourt had begun a domestic enterprise which became one of the chief joys of his later years. His stay in the New Forest in the previous year had made him, in the words that were frequently on his lips, hunger—

For a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where wars and rumours of oppression
Shall never reach me more.

And in the New Forest he found the solitude he sought. Ever since 1870 he had been actively associated with Mr. Shaw Lefevre (Lord Eversley), James Bryce (Lord Bryce), and the other members of the commons' preservation group, and had played a leading part in the movement for maintaining the public rights in open spaces. The preservation of the New Forest and later of Epping Forest owed much to his active support. He was twitted in the Press for choosing to make his home in the Forest and selecting as his site the historic spot where the lodge stood in which, according to tradition, Rufus slept the night before he was murdered. Here he built Malwood. The first intimation of the scheme is in a letter to Granville in which he says:

HOME DEPARTMENT, *May* 8.—The folly of youth is *women*, that of old age is building houses. I am ripe for the latter. In choosing a wife one should never take advice, in selecting an architect *aliter*. I am therefore going to ask your opinion of D—— . . . . I have almost got to the point of plans, and have secured on a ninety-nine years' lease from the Crown twenty-two acres of the choicest spot in the New Forest—I should like one day to show it to so great a connoisseur as yourself.

I don't mean to spend more than £5,000 on my building, so that perhaps D—— would not condescend to such a *bicoque*, except that he did less for —— who lives only two miles from my site.

The preparations for "Malwood" were an agreeable diversion from his conflicts with the Fenians and his colleagues during the summer. Writing to his son at Glen Quoich, Invergarry, he says:

July 10.— . . . I was commanded to Windsor last Saturday for the night, but begged off, and we all went down to Southampton, Lady H., Bobby, Jameson and Aunt Emmie to view Castle Malwood. We had a delicious day on Sunday, driving from Southampton to "the Castle" where we picnicked with Bobs, and Bell met us with a carriage and we spent the rest of the day in the Forest very pleasantly. Bobby was in great delight in his "country house," and it did my heart good to see him.

We discussed plans a good deal, but have not got much *forrader*,

Jameson went on Monday with a note to —— to look at it. But the more I think of it the more I am satisfied a tall boxy house will not look well there, and that we must have more of a cottagey building. On looking at the plans made for Bushey more closely I think they are more the thing we want. The rooms are nearly the size we want. The estimate was for that £2,800 complete ! ! Of course it has not double walls and other things, but I think another £2,000 added would make it all we want for £5,000 *tout complet.* I am about to work this out and will send you plans when they are drafted.

As usual in such circumstances, Harcourt's modest estimate of the cost bore little relation to the actual expenditure ; but the result was to him " a joy for ever." The house, Queen Anne in style, and " cottagey " in feeling, was the product of infinite thought on the part of Harcourt and his son, the latter of whom devoted to the task all the spare time his work as private secretary to his father allowed, staying in a little farm cottage at Malwood for the purpose. The professional advice they sought was given by Evan Christian, architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. When the house was built Harcourt spent most of his leisure there. " I never pass through this gate without feeling that I am coming to a haven of rest," Lady Harcourt records him as saying, and when events in public life wounded or grieved him, he was accustomed to remark, " But I am happy in my home ; all my life long I have been so happy in my home." He delighted in the gardens which he had created, and when showing his visitors round well-kept borders, would stop at intervals to remark with benign satisfaction, " What can be more enjoyable ? " He prided himself on his practical knowledge of horticulture. To an enthusiastic admirer of his creepers who remarked one day, " Sir William, Providence has been very good to you," he replied, " My dear lady, it is not Providence, it is pig-manure ! " He asked for no more active interest than gardening, an economy of physical activity which he shared with one at least of the many visitors whose names filled the visitors' book at Malwood, Joseph Chamberlain. Chamberlain's signature in the visitors' book, by the way,

is the subject of a little story which may be worth recording. His visit followed immediately after the Round Table conference, and when he came to write his name he found that the page of the book was complete. "Now, Mr. Chamberlain," said Lewis Harcourt, who was beside him, "you have a chance to turn over a new leaf." "I'm d——d if I will," replied Chamberlain, and turning back to the full page he signed at the side.

Harcourt was not only interested in his garden, but in agriculture, had theories on scientific farming, and entered into correspondence with the Royal Agricultural Society on rye grass on chalk and clover on clay lands. But he had the experience common to scientific farmers in those days. "I have had a good year on my farm" (at Malwood), he said to Spencer on one occasion. "How good?" asked Spencer. Harcourt: "I think I have not lost more than £3 or £4 per acre. I make my farm accounts balance by adding to them, 'For health, pleasure and occupation,' an amount sufficient to off-set any loss."

CHAPTER XXII

A DIVIDED CABINET

The County Franchise—Harcourt as peacemaker between the two wings of the Cabinet—Impending split on Ireland—Difference with the Lords on the Franchise Bill—Duel with Lord Salisbury—London Government Bill—Dynamite in London—Debate on the Maamtrasna murders—A Cruise in the *Sunbeam*—Lord Rosebery enters the cabinet—Gladstone talks of retiring.

"THE Cabinet is just over," wrote Harcourt to his wife on January 4, 1884. "All is well and my labours of the last fortnight have not been in vain. This is a vast relief to my mind." He added that he was giving a dinner that night to the "G.O.M.," to which he had invited the Cabinet. It was a dinner of reconciliation between the Whig and Radical sections of the Cabinet who had been in sharp antagonism as to the introduction of a County Franchise Bill during the coming Session. The subject had long been in the air, and the Radical wing had begun to force the pace in the previous autumn. In a speech at Newcastle Mr. John Morley had called for the assimilation of the borough and county franchises; at Bristol Chamberlain had declared, personally, for manhood suffrage, and insisted that the extension of the household suffrage to the counties should have precedence over every other measure. The other measures in contemplation were Harcourt's Bill for the reform of London government and a Local Government Bill for the counties. Hartington, as the leader of the Whigs, was opposed to the Franchise Bill because (as he explained at Manchester) of the difficulty of excluding Ireland from its operation, and because the inclusion of Ireland would increase the strength of

the party hostile to English rule. Chamberlain and the Radicals pressed their view, and "One man one vote" became the slogan of their Party. A rupture which would probably have brought the Government down seemed imminent, and throughout the Christmas season there was a ceaseless agitation behind the scenes in which Harcourt played the part of peacemaker between the two wings. Writing to Granville, he says:

Harcourt to Granville.

NUNEHAM PARK, *December* 16, 1883.— . . . I have seen Hartington a good deal this last week and hoped I had made some impression on him. But from what R. Grosvenor [the Chief Whip] told me last night I fear he is as bent as ever on secession. I have not tried upon him the argument of the way his own personal position will be affected because he is above being actuated by such a consideration. But I have begged him to reflect on the ruin he will bring on the cause of moderate Liberalism of which he is chief representative, and the false position in which he will place all of us who have laboured hard for the last ten years to place him where he is, and to sustain him in the high position of authority which he has won for himself in the estimation of the country. But I fear that there is more than meets the eye, and that besides the particular difficulties which he professes to feel there is a rooted disinclination to assume the position which he will have to occupy when Gladstone goes—which he fears (perhaps justly) will be made impossible for him by others. . . .

Hartington had promised Harcourt before he went down to Lancashire not to commit himself, but Chamberlain's speech at Bristol the day before (November 26) had caused his indignation to master his discretion. Harcourt was in despair at the prospect of Hartington's secession and the break-up of the Government. He implored Granville to use his influence with "Mr. G.," who "regards the rest of us as children to whom he is most indulgent, but by whose opinion he is not likely to be guided. . . . He cannot wish his great career to culminate in what will be in effect annihilation for years of the Liberal Party as a whole." He was angry with Hartington and more angry with Chamberlain, who "thinks the universe is only a *replica* of a provincial town," and announced that he was going on Monday to Birmingham to see him—"he is always

frank to me"—on Tuesday to Chatsworth to see Hartington, and on Wednesday to Hawarden to see Gladstone and Childers. "I shall go round all the patients of the Cabinet and examine their tongues and feel their pulses," he wrote to his son in Madeira. The records of these breathless activities during the Christmas season fill countless letters to his wife, his son, Spencer, Granville and other colleagues. "We (himself and the Chief Whip) pounded away at the Marquis (Hartington) all night," and made a hopeful impression; and at Hawarden—where "nothing could be more delightful and kind than the dear old man was"—he succeeded in extracting an important promise from Gladstone. He explained to him that one cause of Hartington's opposition was that he feared that if the Franchise Bill were passed without a concurrent Redistribution Bill, Gladstone would then retire and leave redistribution to him with Chamberlain and the Radicals on his flank. Gladstone therefore expressed his willingness "to remain and be responsible for redistribution after the franchise." Hartington was relieved by the concession, but was still difficult. "I told him," wrote Granville to Harcourt (December 17), "that if as was not improbable it might be necessary to have a fight with Chamberlain, why choose the moment when Chamberlain had Gladstone, the Cabinet and the Irish Government on his side."

In this feverish conflict, Gladstone was singularly patient and conciliatory with the "phantoms which have been scaring Hartington's usually manly mind." Writing to Harcourt, who just before Christmas had taken a group of Derby working men to Hawarden to present a gift of Derby china to the Prime Minister, Gladstone said:

> *December* 26.— . . . It will be a blow to me if I have to mortgage another piece of my small residue of life: but I will not allow any personal consideration (except inability) to be a bar to a favourable arrangement.

But if Hartington would not concur in the Cabinet's policy, Gladstone indicated that he would press him to assume the responsibility of trying his own "with all the support we

can give him, rather than wreck the ship by going, or by letting others send us, to the country in two camps."

That peril was not averted, but it was delayed. The split over Ireland did not come with the Franchise Bill, but its imminence was the shadow that hung over this Christmas conflict. Harcourt himself saw it was coming, though he had little suspicion of the part that he and Chamberlain would play when the rupture occurred. Writing to Gladstone apropos of Hartington's position, he said:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

HOME DEPARTMENT, *December* 28.— . . . He (Hartington) says our Reform Bill will give to Parnell all or nearly every seat in Ireland. I believe that is true and I accept it. It only makes more conspicuous what every one who is acquainted with Ireland knows at the bottom of his heart that the mass of the Irish people hate England with a bitter and irreconcileable hatred and would, if they could, overthrow the connection with us to-morrow. . . . All the concessions we have made have only aggravated it as water does the case of the *hydrops* and as nourishment goes to an abscess. When full expression is given to Irish opinion there will be declared to the world in larger print what we all know to be the case that we hold Ireland by *force and by force alone* as much to-day as in the days of Cromwell, only that we are obliged to hold it by a force ten times larger than he found necessary. We hold the fifty millions of Hindustan with 60,000 men. The five millions of Irish require 40,000 to maintain the British connection—about what Bismarck requires to keep Alsace and Lorraine. . . .

Our concessions and the greater freedom of communication with America have given greater force and fuller means of expression to the hatred which always existed and will always exist. We never have governed and we never shall govern Ireland by the good will of its people. The stronger the will of the people becomes and the greater the freedom of its expression becomes the more obvious it will be that we govern *physically by our armed force—politically by the English and Scotch majority in Parliament.*

All this sounds very shocking and very brutal, but it is true. "'Tis true, 'tis pity; pity 'tis, 'tis true." There is no use making ourselves any illusions on a matter vital to our existence as a nation.

I therefore concur with Hartington as to the magnitude and the substance of the danger we have to face. I differ from him only as to the method of encountering it. He thinks it worth while to attempt some system which should secure to the loyal population of Ireland some share of representation so that it should be made to appear in

the H. of C. that there is a loyal section of Irish members. I believe that to be impracticable and if it could be accomplished it would be ineffectual. If Hartington could get his minority representation in Ulster what would it give him? Ten or at most twenty Irish loyalist M.P.'s. Parnell would still have his eighty or ninety. Is it worth while to make great sacrifices of principle affecting Great Britain in order to secure such an infinitesimal advantage? The interests of the loyalists in Ireland cannot be defended by a small fraction of the Irish representation. *Non tali auxilio.* . . . The real safeguard of the unity of the Empire and the fate of the Irish loyalists will depend not upon whether Ulster has ten votes more or less, but upon the fact that we can place if necessary two *corps d'armée* in Ireland, and that we can carry into the lobby 550 English and Scotch members against Mr. Parnell and his supporters.

There is only one of Hartington's apprehensions which I fully share and that is the dread lest on this or any other question the Liberal Party should be betrayed into anything which looks like an alliance covert or avowed with Parnell. I am as ready and eager as he can be to make the breach between us and Parnell as open, as conspicuous and as incurable as possible. It is on this subject that I dread the tendencies of Chamberlain who seems to me to be always hankering after a policy which should secure the Parnellite vote. . . .

You will see my views, if not sanguine, are at least defined. I do not doubt myself that Ireland will break up this Government and this Party as it has done so many Governments and Parties before—and will continue to do so until its real condition is recognized, avowed and acted upon by all Parties alike. We are fast approaching this issue, and the sooner we reach it I think the better.

"I am glad the time has not come," wrote Gladstone to Harcourt the next day, "when new points of departure in Irish legislation have to be considered, and that good old Time, who carries me kindly on his back, will probably plant me before that day comes outside the range of practical politics."

II

The hope was not realized, but the immediate danger passed. While the Cabinet was sitting on January 3, Harcourt wrote to his son, "Things are going well," and next day he was able to repeat that the differences were settled and "we all hang together," and that in honour of the event he had arranged a Cabinet dinner at Grafton Street for that night—"ordered at twelve hours' notice."

There were to be present Gladstone, Derby, Granville, Hartington, Chamberlain, Childers, Dodson, Attorney-General and "Self." "So," he wrote to his son, "you see all the lambs and the lions will lie down together and I, like a little child, shall lead them." The dinner was a great success. "We parted good friends and kissed all round," and the public knew nothing about the battle royal of which it was the agreeable conclusion.

The prolonged struggle over the Franchise Bill does not belong to this narrative. Harcourt had played his part in composing the differences in the Cabinet, and until the conflict with the Lords in the autumn he was mainly employed on other issues. It is enough here to say that the Bill, the net effect of which was to give a vote to the head of every household in the counties as was the case in the boroughs, was introduced by Gladstone on February 29 with the promise that a measure of redistribution would follow. The Bill passed its final stages in the House of Commons on June 26. In the House of Lords, however, it met with a resistance which brought about a constitutional crisis of a severe kind. Lord Salisbury very astutely took the ground which Hartington had taken during the struggle in the Cabinet at Christmas time. He argued that the passing of the Franchise Bill without a concurrent measure of redistribution meant that redistribution would probably be left to a new Parliament elected on the new franchise. By this means he was able to oppose the Bill without denying the inherent justice of the reform.

The wrecking amendment of Lord Cairns, based on the Salisbury case, was carried in the House of Lords by 205 to 146 votes, and Gladstone at once took up the challenge and declared the intention of the Government to proceed with the Bill in an autumn Session. Harcourt strongly endorsed this view, urging Gladstone (July 9) to "clear the decks for action at once and get rid of all lumber of all descriptions" in order to keep "the Bill and nothing but the Bill" before the country. During the fencing and skirmishing that

preceded the renewal of the parliamentary battle, Harcourt was all for forcing the fight with a high hand and carrying the constitutional issue to the country. "I think if Gladstone was to resign and Salisbury was to come in and dissolve," he wrote to Granville (September 14), "we should beat the latter into a cocked hat in the constituencies whose blood would be up. I should therefore *ride for a resignation.*" But negotiations were going on at Balmoral,[1] where Hartington was in attendance, and we find Ponsonby writing to Harcourt (October 11) imploring him to be "conciliatory" in his coming speeches in the country, and "trembling at what Lord Salisbury may say at Kelso to-day. For negotiation while big guns are firing is difficult." But the big guns went off with full charges, and there was no more resounding incident of the struggle than the duel between Salisbury and Harcourt. The latter replied to Salisbury at Derby on October 10, 1884, in one of the most forcible deliverances of his career. Declaring that the whole *impasse* rested with one man, Lord Salisbury, he devoted a speech occupying nearly a page of *The Times* to a pitiless criticism of his political philosophy and public policy:

> . . . I do not impeach his motives (he said); I am ready to admit that he acts with sincerity and courage, as we all claim to act for that which we believe to be for the advantage of our country and our Party; but Lord Salisbury is what the French call a fatal man —that is a man who is fatal to the men he leads and the cause he espouses. He is very fond of historical illustrations. He talked the other day about the Empire of Rome and the Empire of France; but I will give him an illustration nearer home. The origin of Lord Salisbury's race belongs to the famous epoch when the modern greatness of England was founded, but Lord Salisbury has nothing of the masculine confidence in the fibre of the English people which distinguished the councils of Elizabeth: his statesmanship belongs to a later period and is founded upon the model of the Stuart type. His statecraft is that of Laud and his temper that of Strafford. They were all sincere, high-couraged men; but a Charles destroyed the monarchy of which he was the chief; a Laud ruined the Church

[1] For a tribute by Harcourt to the Queen's share in securing an accommodation between the parties, see his letter to her of Sept. 23, 1884 (p. 533).

over which he presided, and a Wentworth lost his order and himself. . . . The desperate resistance which they offered brought them within twenty-four hours of revolution and the twenty-four hours expired. And if Lord Salisbury has imbibed their spirit and intends to imitate their example he is as likely as they were to destroy the Party which he leads and the order to which he belongs.

In a lighter vein he said that Lord Salisbury reminded him of the old ladies who never went to bed without looking for burglars underneath the bed: "He never sees a voter, especially a Liberal voter, added to a constituency without thinking he is going to have his pocket picked or that he is going to be robbed of some darling privilege." As to the demand on the part of the House of Lords to dissolve the House of Commons, it was "opposed to the whole principle of this country. It has never been admitted, it has never been tolerated and it shall never be allowed."

Salisbury retaliated no less vehemently at Kelso, declaring that Harcourt had reduced English political controversy to an American level—a characteristically insular reflection upon the political manners of another nation. But in spite of this heavy cannonading, the negotiations went on. As the crisis drew near it became evident that the Lords were not disposed to force a constitutional conflict with the representative House, and as the Government agreed to introduce a Seats Bill as a guarantee that it would be proceeded with in the next Session, the Franchise Bill, on being re-introduced by Gladstone, went smoothly through its various stages, was accepted by the Lords, and became law before Christmas.

In his voluminous letters in the spring to his son in Madeira Harcourt, in the midst of social and political gossip about snap divisions in the House, visits to that "sportive place Windsor Castle," the prospects of the Government and so on, is mainly concerned with his London Bill. "I am buried up to my eyes day and night on the London Government Bill and see and hear of nothing else," he says. Sometimes he is doubtful whether it will come to birth, but he has "all its baby clothes and nursery

apparatus ready." Even when he introduced the Bill on the eve of the Easter holidays, he was not very hopeful. "I approach the task (he said) with the feelings of a navigator who enters a sea strewn with many wrecks, and whose shores are whitened with the bones of many previous adventurers." He knew that he was attacking many vested interests which would fight hard for their life. The Bill which he foreshadowed was a bold handling of a complicated problem. It conceived of London as a unit, not broken up into separate boroughs, but administered by a single council, of which the City Corporation, popularly elected by municipal districts, was to be the foundation. The Metropolitan Board of Works and the Vestries would disappear, and the local administration would be carried out by local district councils, not having independent authority like the vestries, but exercising authority delegated to them by the Central Council. The police question which had been the subject of so much controversy between Gladstone and Harcourt in the previous year had been settled on the basis of the City police being under the new Council, and the Metropolitan police remaining under the Home Office. In his speeches on the first and second readings, Harcourt exposed the evils of the existing government of London, and argued powerfully against the administration of this great unit in "isolated areas" of the rich and of the poor. Writing to Gladstone on this point he quoted—replying to the Opposition argument of the general health of the whole area—the shocking comparison between the mortality in the poor areas and the mortality in the rich as a reason for central sanitary control. On this point he was enthusiastically supported by Gladstone.

But the Opposition was powerful and came, not only from the Tory Party, but from the vested interests, the City Corporation, the Board of Works and the Vestries. With the conflict over the Franchise Bill developing, the prospects of Harcourt's scheme going through became dim. "It is too kind of you to offer to throw your shield over the London Bill," he writes to Gladstone on July 5. "It will

at all events give it *euthanasia* and throw a halo over its setting sun." On the second reading Gladstone made a memorable speech in support of the Bill; but by this time its fate had been sealed. The attitude of the Lords on the Franchise Bill had now become clear, and resolving to stake their whole existence on the passage of that measure, the Government, in Harcourt's words, "cleared their decks for action," and among the lumber that was thrown into the sea was the measure which had occupied so much of Harcourt's time and thought for two years past.

III

But Ireland rather than London was still the dominating concern of Harcourt's official life. "I have sunk now into a mere head detective and go nowhere and see nothing," he wrote to his son in Madeira (February 29). The remark was apropos of a new series of dynamite scares which had alarmed the public. An explosion had taken place the previous day at Victoria Station, shattering the roof and doing serious damage. The dynamite was contained in a portmanteau left in the cloak-room and timed by a clockwork detonator. The similar infernal machines found at Charing Cross and Paddington did not explode. Writing to the Queen, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Queen Victoria.

HOME DEPARTMENT, *February* 29, 1884.—The origin of these devilish schemes is certain. They are planned, subsidized and executed by the assassination societies of American Fenians, who announce their intentions and advertise them openly in newspapers published without the smallest restraint in the United States.

Your Majesty will remember that the Government addressed to the Government of the United States a strong remonstrance on this subject in the spring of last year. To this no reply was made at the time, but at the end of last month a reply of a most unfriendly character was sent through Mr. Lowell, to which it is now proposed at once to send an energetic rejoinder in particular relative to the recent transactions. No other civilized country in the world does or would tolerate the open advocacy of assassination and murder. . . .

Later, in connection with other outrages, Harcourt recurs to the same subject in writing to the Queen (June 7):

Our remonstrances to the Government of the United States (he says) have led to no practical results, and with the election of President impending neither Party will risk a quarrel with the Irish vote.

In a further letter (June 25) he dismisses the suggestion of the offer of rewards as futile. "In the case of the Phœnix Park murders we offered £10,000 without obtaining a scrap of information. . . . It is from this source alone (informers) that we can hope for success. They are not tempted by these public offers. They know where to go with valuable information if they possess and are willing to communicate it." Meanwhile the Queen was disturbed about her own safety. On the one hand, she was "rather sour," said Ponsonby, at Harcourt's insistence on her being shadowed when her carriage left the grounds at Windsor; and on the other, she complained (July 13) through Ponsonby that "the terrace above the departure station was unguarded yesterday at the Great Western Railway, Paddington." Ponsonby added that the Queen insisted that he should write "because you advised her always to have equerries here (Windsor), where there is nobody, and leave her exposed in London." Harcourt's reply may be guessed by Ponsonby's comment on it next day—"I will explain the first part of your letter to H.M. I won't show it, for the latter part will not elicit peace-on-earth remarks." The Queen was not the only source of the "head detective's" worries. While she was complaining on the one hand, Gladstone was renewing his protests on the other. He had always objected to police protection at Hawarden, and now finally put down his foot, telling Harcourt through E. W. Hamilton (May 24) that he would "give orders to have the gates closed" against the constables. He was "ashamed of the expense he had already been the cause of inflicting on his fellow ratepayers," and he would "tolerate it" no longer.

Throughout the summer outrages and arrests continued, and Harcourt's depression about the Irish situation deepened. Writing to Spencer, he said:

September 21.— . . . As you know I have always been a pessimist on the subject of Ireland, and I confess I see no ray of light in the future. It is idle to conceal from ourselves that we do and only can hold the country by force. I am afraid the *via media* of conciliation is impossible—there is no alternative between *separation* and coercion. . . .

There was at this time a formidable revival of an old theme—the Maamtrasna case. It will be remembered that Myles Joyce, one of the three men executed for that crime, declared his innocence on the scaffold and was exonerated by his two companions. His execution was alleged by the Irish to be a "judicial murder," and in August 1884 feeling in the case was revived by the fact that Thomas Casey, one of the approvers on whose evidence Joyce was convicted, sought an interview with the Archbishop of Tuam, and informed him of his desire to make reparation by a public confession for the double crime of murder and perjury (against Myles Joyce, whom he now declared to be innocent) committed by him in connection with the Maamtrasna trials. Spencer told Harcourt (August 18) that he was convinced that the confession was a complete lie, forced from Casey by the pressure of his wife and others, and said it was of the utmost importance to meet the case promptly as "the real motive is to try to upset the convictions and throw discredit on the administration of the law." Harcourt agreed (August 21) with Spencer that the demand for an inquiry based on the recantation of the informers must be refused. "It is the contradictory oath of the same men with relation to the same facts, and no conceivable inquiry could, as far as they are concerned, elicit whether their lying is in their present or their former statement."

When Parliament met in the autumn, the Irish Party moved an amendment to the Address calling for an inquiry. A significant circumstance, the first foreshadowing of a momentous change in the attitude of parties on the Irish question, was that Lord Randolph Churchill and the Fourth Party supported Parnell's demand. There was another

significant circumstance. Harcourt spoke in the debate on October 27. Replying to a suggestion from Gladstone in the morning of that day, Harcourt said he quite agreed with his Chief, and that "I mean to say little or nothing personally against the Irish M.P.'s. I propose to give them entire credit for their desire to absolve men whom they believe to be innocent, but to point out that for that purpose it was wholly unnecessary and unjust to accuse the Judiciary and Executive of Ireland of a wilful and deliberate perversion of justice, which is really the charge and the motive." In his speech he surveyed the evidence in the Maamtrasna case, and declared that he had carefully investigated the circumstances before Spencer replied to the Archbishop's letter, and had no hesitation in telling Spencer that he considered there was no justification for interfering with the sentence. "Hon. members opposite," he said, "asked the House to believe that the witnesses were perjured, that the juries were packed, and that the judge, the crown counsel, the resident magistrates and Lord Spencer were engaged in a common conspiracy to do to death men of whom they knew nothing." If such an indictment were endorsed by the House of Commons they would paralyse government in Ireland and revive the reign of terror which the firm and just administration of Lord Spencer had broken down. The debate was resumed the following night, Gladstone defending the Government's action, and the motion was lost by 170 votes. Writing to Spencer on the debate, Harcourt said:

Harcourt to Spencer.

October 29.— . . . It would have done your heart good to hear the cheers with which Gladstone's panegyric on you was hailed. The Irishmen howled at us like hyenas all through the debate, but their extreme violence of behaviour and language, especially their abuse of you, destroyed the chance they had of detaching some of our Radicals on the specious pretext of inquiry. Everybody saw they wanted no inquiry, but were hunting for blood.

The division I hope you will consider satisfactory. The number of the minority was smaller than was expected, containing no Liberals except such as Cowen, Gourley, Labouchere, Storey and a queer fellow of the name of Thompson, M.P. for Durham.

The bid of Lord Randolph Churchill for the Irish vote was most

barefaced. He had hardly any actual followers into the Lobby except Gorst and Clarke, and two or three odd fish like Aylmer, C. Kennard, MacIver and Eardley Wilmot. Even his jackal Wolff did not vote with him. . . .

IV

The year was not without its relaxations, mostly enjoyed at sea. In May, Harcourt went for a few days' cruise in the Trinity House yacht, *Galatea*, among the Channel Islands, accompanied by Loulou and Chamberlain, and his letters to his wife are a pleasant record of his experiences. He anchors at Alderney "which is a black dismal place with a ruined breakwater and hardly any people"; goes to the trial of "a poor wretch of a sailor for insubordination," and hears him "unjustly sentenced to a month's imprisonment . . . four times as much as he would have got if H.S. had not been present"; at Guernsey goes with Loulou in state to Church in the Governor's pew; drives round the island and finds it unimpressive; calls at Malwood on his way home to see the progress of building and, back in London, has with Loulou "a grand tidying up, emptying boxes and arranging letters for the last thirty years. . . . I have come across many memories which touch me deeply."

When Parliament rose he and Loulou set out on a cruise in the *Sunbeam* with Lord Brassey. "We started (from Cowes) Wednesday evening amidst some rain," he wrote to his wife (August 16), "and found our other passengers on board—the two Liddell girls both very natural and lively, and the grass widow of a Captain of a man-of-war who is detained aboard. She is not seriously dangerous especially as she sings beautifully. Our skipper is most hospitable and kind. At midnight on Wednesday we abandoned our steam. Brassey cannot bear the kettle, and we have depended wholly on sail since, which has made our passage slow. . . ." They went down the Channel, calling at Budleigh Salterton "to telegraph to you and H.O.," and at Plymouth to find his official boxes. But the messenger who was to bring them "being I suppose as usual drunk, went to Falmouth instead. So I have not

had a box since I left." They visited the Scillies, to see "the Monarch, Smith-Dorrien, and his wife and beautiful gardens. . . . We thought the male and female sovereigns rather bored with their dominions which we did not envy them." Leaving the Scillies, a fine breeze sprang up, and "we are bowling along before it into Holyhead." Thence to the Isle of Man when "I must do a whole week's boxes." After that away to Oban and on to Balmacarra, where he was to join his wife and "Bobs."

At Invercauld he met Gladstone who, he writes to Granville, "is here in great physical force after Midlothian. . . . The popularity of G., in this country at least, is greater than ever it was. It does not alter my opinion that there will be resignation of Government before Christmas. The blow is struck which is to bring R. (Rosebery) into the Cabinet. It was an awkward business, but I think necessary."

The "awkward business" referred to was the difficulty of getting rid of Carlingford to make room for Lord Rosebery as Lord Privy Seal. "Nothing except absolute and hard negatives have been obtained from the receiver of the letter (to Carlingford) which you saw at Invercauld," wrote Gladstone to Harcourt (September 17). The question was whether a minister could be removed if he did not choose to go, and Carlingford did not choose to go. Harcourt, replying to Gladstone, said:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

Loch Alsh, *September* 22.— . . . I confess I have never doubted that Cabinet offices were held *durante bene placato* of the Prime Minister. No doubt when it comes to an open breach as between Pitt and Thurlow the direct interposition of the Crown may have to be invoked, and the removal would be at the Sovereign's command. But in the ordinary working of a Cabinet I have always supposed that the Prime Minister had the same authority to modify it as he has to construct it. . . .

In my opinion it is no more open to the head of a department in the Cabinet to say to the potter that he will be an *urceus* or an *amphora* than it is to a Commander of a Division to say to the Commander-in-Chief that he will not be superseded in the command by another officer. The interests at stake are far too serious to admit of the doctrine of fixity of tenure.

That this must be so is obvious because the first Minister can always say to any other member of the Administration, "if you don't go I will." But it is incredible that things should ever be pushed to such a point as that. Good feeling as well as good sense forbids it. And a man must be pachydermatous indeed who is incapable of accepting the first hint that his room is wanted whether he is on a visit or in a Cabinet. I am sure much less than you have said would have made me pack up my traps. . . .

It was not until later in the year, and after other changes had taken place in the Ministry, that Carlingford was at last induced to retire, making way for Lord Rosebery.

This year saw the first appearance of his son on a public platform. It took place at a meeting at Derby, and Harcourt wrote:

Harcourt to his son Lewis.

October 27.— . . . We are delighted with the accounts of your speech; you may believe how anxious I am that you should do well, though I did not like to show it too much, or to interfere too much with your own bent.

I always knew, my darling, that you would do well when you were tried, and that your head is as sound as your heart—only a good deal harder. I have no joy like that of your happiness and success. You have been and are all in all to me, and grow dearer to me every day as you fulfil all my cherished hopes and expectations.

Still I wish you were a little boy still and were not bound to be plunged into the stormy seas of politics, about which I feel as anxious for you as I do in the equinoctials of the West Coast, and sometimes feel disposed to *get you ashore*. Such is the timidity of old age and the fondness of a father. But you will understand and sympathize with both. . . .

His not infrequent differences with Gladstone did not diminish the warmth of Harcourt's feelings towards him. Writing to his wife, he says:

December 2.— . . . Gladstone talks more seriously than ever of retirement. I fancy he means *at once*—great as the blow will be to us I have hardly the heart to remonstrate against it as he can now retire at the zenith of his glory, and the next year's struggles will be neither pleasant nor glorious.

And a few days later he sends a characteristic expression of his goodwill to his Chief, to whom he writes:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

HOME OFFICE, *December* 17.—The borough of Derby is principally celebrated for three things, its china, its members of Parliament and its rounds of beef. You have shown such an indulgent appreciation of the first two productions that, remembering your approval of the cold boiled beef at Invercauld, I wish you to make experience of the third.

A round of beef prepared after the Derby fashion will I hope reach Hawarden some time next week, and I hope it may find a place on your Christmas sideboard.

You have always been so kind in your inquiries after my brother that you will be glad to hear that he is fairly well restored to health, and that we are going with the whole family to spend Christmas with him at Nuneham.

Redistribution seems to be marching merrily and Proportional Representation to be nowhere.

In his reply Gladstone said "the promised round of beef will be perfect if you and Lady Harcourt will come here to eat it," and referring to Proportional Representation, adds:

. . . The waters of Redistribution are at present marvellously smooth, but Courtney, young and sanguine, sends me with exultation a letter from the O'Conor Don, which he thinks must settle the controversy in his favour. . . . .

CHAPTER XXIII

KHARTUM AND GORDON

Fall of Khartum—Harcourt's Memorandum to the Cabinet on Egypt —Speech on the Vote of Censure—Chamberlain and the Unauthorized Programme—Demand for the renewal of the Crimes Act —Cabinet divisions on Irish Local Government—The Dynamite Scare—Diplomatic correspondence with Washington—More Dissension in the Cabinet on Ireland—Defeat on the Wine and Spirit Duties—Resignation—Harcourt's criticism of Churchill —To the Queen on Party Government—The Skye Crofters.

THE new year opened under the shadow of an event that shook the Government to its foundations and that still reverberates through history. Khartum fell on January 26, and the fall was made momentous by the murder of Gordon. The disaster was the climax of a tragic entanglement in which the Government had become involved as a consequence of the Egyptian policy they had taken over from the Disraelian Government, and from which they had found themselves unable to disengage themselves. The withdrawal of France from the joint control of Egypt, and the sequence of events had left Great Britain sole suzerain over that country. The Government did not want the burden, and regarded it only as a temporary expedient into which they had drifted unwillingly and from which they would escape when they could do so with honour and advantage to the country. Their responsibilities were limited to Egypt, but unfortunately the Khedive's rule extended to the vast region south of Egypt, known as the Sudan, and in this region the Khedive's government was little more than a system of wringing " money, women and

drink from a miserable population" (Wingate, *Mahdi-ism and the Egyptian Sudan*, pp. 50, 51).

The result of this atrocious misgovernment was a rebel movement, led by a native of Dongola who proclaimed himself the Mahdi. It began in religious fanaticism, but it gathered to itself all the political discontents of the tribes who were groaning under the exaction of the Khedive's rule, and assumed, in Gladstone's phrase, the character of "a people rightly struggling to be free." At the inspiration of the Khedive's advisers, an expedition was sent under General Hicks, who had been appointed on the staff of the Egyptian army, to quell the rebellion and on November 5, 1883, Hicks's force was cut to pieces by the dervishes of the Mahdi. The British Government, whose sphere of influence did not extend to the Sudan, would have been wise if they had checked the adventure at its inception. Its failure made the course clear. All competent opinion, including that of Sir Evelyn Baring (Lord Cromer), the British representative in Egypt, agreed that the evacuation of the Sudan was necessary. Its reconquest by the resources at the command of the Egyptian Government was impossible, and Gordon himself, in a letter to Granville (January 22, 1884), described it as a useless possession, and said the Queen's Ministers were "fully justified in recommending evacuation." But the question of evacuation, in the face of the victorious dervishes, was difficult. It involved the withdrawal of the scattered Egyptian garrisons, and after the opposition of Baring had been overcome, Gordon was despatched to carry out the task.

It was an unfortunate choice, suggested to Hartington by Wolseley, consented to by Granville, Northbrook and Dilke, and endorsed by Gladstone on the day (Jan. 18) of Gordon's interview at the War Office, but only approved by the Cabinet as a whole four days after the event. Gordon was a brave and high-minded man, a blend of the soldier and the mystic, but moved by sudden impulses, lacking in sanity and not easy to control. He had favoured evacuation, and had been sent out to report

on the best means of carrying it out without the employment of British forces; but once in Khartum he was seized with the idea of "smashing the Mahdi" by means of British and Indian troops, and declared that to leave outlying garrisons to their fate would be "an indelible disgrace." As Hartington, then War Minister, pointed out, we had no moral obligations in regard to Egyptian garrisons in the Sudan. We had not sent them there, and were not responsible for their safety. The defiance of the authority and instructions on which he had been sent out should have been followed by the recall of Gordon, but though Gladstone favoured this course, he was overborne by his colleagues, and through the spring and summer of 1884 the problem of what was to be done occupied the Government and the War Office. Gordon had indiscreetly allowed the Khedive's secret firman announcing the total abandonment of the Sudan to become known, and the news destroyed any moral influence he might have exercised over the tribes. The Mahdi's forces, inspirited by the fact, advanced northwards. Berber fell in May, and a little later Khartum was enveloped. There followed in England the popular clamour natural in such circumstances. Gordon had struck the imagination of the people, and his perilous situation aroused widespread anxiety. It became increasingly doubtful whether he could escape, and the question of his relief overshadowed all other considerations in the public mind. A fierce controversy raged in military circles as to the best route by which a relief expedition should be sent.

In the end the Nile route was chosen, and an expedition under the command of Wolseley reached Wady Halfa on October 5, and commenced the campaign. The advance, delayed by the navigation of the shifting channels of the river with its sandbanks and cataracts, by the difficulties of camel transport and by the perils of the Bayuda desert, infested with sleepless enemies, was slow, and in spite of the military successes at Abu Klea and Kirbekan, it was not until January 28, 1885, that the first steamer of the relief force came in sight of Khartum, only to learn that the

town had fallen two days before and that Gordon was among the slain. The blow fell with crushing effect upon a Government which, apart from the military enterprise, was rent with dissension on the question of Egyptian policy and confronted with the disquieting attitude of the continental Powers on the subject. The record of all this does not belong to my subject; but the confusion within the Cabinet may be illustrated by a few passages from the Journal:

November 17, 1884.—W. V. H. this morning circulated a memorandum[1] to the Cabinet on Egypt and advocates our informing the Powers that we shall only stay there long enough to get Gordon away, and that our occupation will cease within twelve months, at the end of which time Europe must make some joint provision for carrying on the Government and administration of Egypt. . . .

W. V. H. said at the Cabinet the other day, "the only thing for us to do is to get out of Egypt as soon as possible"—on which Selborne observed, "that is the opinion of one member of the Cabinet," to which Mr. Gladstone replied, "you had better say *two*." . . .

January 3, 1885.— . . . Chamberlain is very jingo on the Egyptian question, and wants "to have a go in" at Bismarck and France, by which I suppose he means a European war. . . .

January 20, 1885.—Chamberlain laid up with an abscess in the jaw. W. V. H. and I went to see him in Prince's Gardens. We found him in great pain, and he is to have several old stumps taken out under chloroform this afternoon. He said, "You Peace at any Price people ought to be glad that I am laid up as I suppose you will get your wicked way at the Cabinet this afternoon." He wants to threaten and coerce, and if necessary fight France, but at the same time has no idea of staying an indefinite time in Egypt or declaring a protectorate or guaranteeing the debt. . . .

Dinner at 7, Grafton Street to-night: Mr. Gladstone, Lord Carlingford, Lady Stanley of Alderley and Lyulph Stanley. Gladstone in very good spirits, talked chiefly about crofters, education, school boards and the Croker Papers. . . . Afrer dinner a yellow box arrived for Gladstone with a letter in it from Hartington. I guess that at last he has resigned.

January 21.—I was right; Hartington has resigned and Northbrook will probably go with him. . . . Gladstone said last night to W. V. H. that even if Hartington goes nothing will induce him to give up. . . . .

January 22.—W. V. H. and I went to see Chamberlain to-day. The operation has been successful and he is in less pain. They talked

[1] Printed as Appendix II to this volume.

Egyptian affairs steadily for about an hour and a half. . . . He (Chamberlain) was in favour of writing what he calls a "Palmerstonian Despatch" to Lyons which should be shown confidentially to Ferry with an intimation that if the French Government did not give way the despatch would be sent officially. Chamberlain said that he is quite convinced that France would not fight as the Chinese War is already very unpopular there, and there is no chance of a European combination against us; that Germany would not join France, as Bismarck has said, "You settle with France and then I will settle with you." W. V. H. said there were as many policies for Egypt as there were men in the Cabinet, but Chamberlain replied, "No, there are not more than three or four men capable of making one, and there are only three practical ones before us. There is Hartington's with his 'Pay and stay,' yours, which is 'Pay and scuttle,' and mine, which is 'Scuttle and repudiate.'" . . . [H.]

The news of the fall of Khartum created a wave of public anger, and Gladstone himself expected that his Government would not survive. Harcourt had expressed the view that the end was near for some time, and in letters to Spencer, his wife and others had discussed the alternatives—a Hartington Ministry or the handing of affairs over to Salisbury. "The divisions of opinion on Egyptian policy," he had written to Spencer (January 4), "have brought things into such a deplorable state of confusion in the Cabinet that it is impossible to conjecture when the *coup de grâce* may come. The only thing which seems certain is that things cannot go on as they are. No one who attended the Cabinets on Friday and Saturday could wish that they should." He himself had been hostile to the whole course of development in Egypt. During the discussions in the previous year he had twice drawn up memoranda to the Cabinet declaring for a policy of withdrawal from Egypt. The second of these memoranda (November 16, 1884) will serve to indicate his general attitude on the subject of the occupation of Egypt. He had disapproved of the choice of Gordon for the task of evacuating the Sudan, and had anticipated an unhappy issue of that adventure.

But the course of events modified his view as to the necessities of the situation, and writing to Mr. (Sir) G. O Trevelyan (February 14) he insisted on the need of Wolseley

going forward " to destroy the Mahdi's power at Khartum." Like his Chief, to whom the Queen on the news of Gordon's death addressed a rebuke not in cipher but *en clair*, Harcourt had frequent intimations from Osborne of the royal indignation. " She read the telegram to me," wrote Ponsonby, " and said ' Too late again.' " Harcourt was anxious about her indisposition, and inquired whether she had been made nervous about " the American telegram " (reporting an offer by the Fenians of 10,000 dollars for the body of the Prince of Wales dead or alive), and Ponsonby replied, " No, but the events in the Sudan and her indignation with the Ministers aggravated her indisposition." Next day (February 18) Ponsonby reported to Harcourt that she was better, but " her indignation greater."

II

In the debate on Northcote's Vote of Censure, which lasted several nights, the liveliest interest centred in Harcourt's reply (February 28) to the attacks of Goschen. " Right or wrongly," said the *Annual Register* in its review of the debate, " Sir William Harcourt had been assumed to be the chief, perhaps the sole representative in the Cabinet of the policy of ' scuttling ' out of Egypt, and consequently would have been, it would be supposed, the last person chosen to give a satisfactory explanation." But his defence of the Government was generally admitted to be a powerful and convincing achievement. He had two attacks from opposite quarters to meet—the frontal attack of the Opposition on the ground of failure to support Gordon, and the more dangerous attack from the Radicals on the ground that the advance to Khartum should not be pursued. Declining to take notice of the charges of treachery or intentional neglect of Gordon, he repudiated the errors of judgment and waste of time with which the Cabinet had been charged. He reviewed the story of the enterprise, begun, with Gordon's concurrence, as a peaceful mission, relying on Gordon's own personal influence with the tribes and converted chiefly by his action into a policy of " smash-

ing the Mahdi." He pointed out that in every step taken the Government had been governed by expert opinion, that the choice of the Nile route was a military decision, and that the relief would not have been too late but for the treachery of Ferhat Pasha. "You may say," he said, "that treachery is the thing that might have been expected. Yes, it might, just as much on the day after Gordon arrived in Khartum as the day on which he died. There was no period when he was not exposed to treachery." In answering the Radical hostility to the continuance of the advance on Khartum, he said:

> . . . I would never have consented to go to Khartum with the intention of annexing or occupying the Sudan, or any part of it, for Egypt or for England. I never would have consented to go to Khartum for the mere purpose of vengeance for the death of Gordon. We should have shown very little appreciation of Gordon's character if we did—it would have been a very ill monument to his memory. The only reason, in my opinion, that justifies our going to Khartum since the death of Gordon—the primary object was the saving of Gordon—and there were secondary objects referred to by the Prime Minister—is that it is the only manner in which the evacuation of the Sudan can be safely accomplished consistently with the safety of Egypt. . . .

As to the future he regarded "the permanent occupation of Egypt as the most dangerous policy that could be conceived." England could not administer Egypt, where several nations had interests, as she had administered India; and the longer we remained in Egypt the greater would be the responsibilities we should incur. The Government did not go thither, he said, with the idea of remaining; and if the House wished them to do so, it must bear in mind that it would necessitate the annexation of both Egypt and the Sudan. The speech saved the Government. Lord Morley, who was prominent in the attack on the Khartum advance, has left it on record that "it satisfied the gentlemen below the gangway," and with the support of the Radicals the Government defeated the Vote of Censure, though only by the narrow majority of fourteen.

For a moment the Government halted between the

alternatives of resignation and continuance in office, but events dictated the decision. Clouds were gathering on the Afghan frontier, towards which Russia had made menacing advances which culminated in the Penjdeh incident and the Vote of Credit with which Gladstone met the challenge. In the presence of this new danger, the Sudan enterprise assumed a secondary place. There was a sharp controversy on the proposal that Wolseley should be Governor-General of the Sudan—a proposal made by Wolseley and Baring. The Cabinet refused to accede to the suggestion, and, through Ponsonby, the Queen, who was "in great wrath," sent an indignant protest (March 15) to Harcourt, as one of those who "belong to that section of the Cabinet which objects to these requests of Lord Wolseley. Her Majesty commands me to ask whether you do not think that the refusal to listen to our agents places them in a most serious position, and that it will lead to the ruin of all that is requisite for the honour and safety of this country." In replying Harcourt denied that there was disagreement in the Cabinet on the subject, and said:

Harcourt to Ponsonby.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, *March* 17.— . . . Such a measure would have been greatly misunderstood both at home and abroad, and would have led to the belief in England, Egypt and Europe that we intended to remain there. We have really no claim to the Sudan either in *right* or in *fact*. In right it belongs either to Turkey or to Egypt. In *fact* we only occupy a small corner of it. General Gordon was sent to evacuate the Sudan by peaceful means—Lord Wolseley has been commissioned to effect the same object by force of arms. For this purpose it is not at all necessary that he should be invested with what is after all a purely nominal title, viz. Governor-General of the Sudan—which includes vast territories he has never seen and never will see. When the Duke of Wellington was in Spain and in France he did not find it necessary to declare himself Governor-General of those countries. . . .

It soon became apparent, however, that the reconquest of the Sudan was impracticable without long and costly preparation, and the advance was abandoned, only, however, after a severe struggle in the Cabinet, in which Glad-

stone, Harcourt, Granville, Derby and others were opposed by Hartington, Selborne and Northbrook. At one moment, indeed, there was imminent risk of a break-up of the Cabinet, and Gladstone wrote to Harcourt:

10, Downing Street, *May* 8.— . . . I hope that in the conversation which you prosecuted with so much vigour this evening on the Bench you were not under the impression that some degree of secession from within the Cabinet would as a matter of course have the same effect on our position as defeat in the House of Commons. It would be a deplorable, an ominous, perhaps a fatal event; but I for one do not think it would in itself have any of the absolving force which would belong to a vote of the House. . . .

III

In the meantime the eternal problem of Ireland haunted the Government like a spectre. There had never been agreement in the Cabinet on the policy to be pursued, and now the process of disintegration began to reveal itself in public. Chamberlain raised the issue in the country in a series of Radical speeches which spread alarm amongst his colleagues. He had been interrupted in his campaign by an abscess in his jaw, and Harcourt wrote (January 18) warning him that if he went about slaughtering the landed Philistines he must expect to suffer in his jaw, and that he would have to say with Thiers, when he suffered from a disease in his tongue, "Je suis puni par où j'ai péché." Chamberlain gaily replied that no weakness would prevent him from speaking, and proceeded to set the political world agog by his Unauthorized Programme, preaching manhood suffrage, a wide scheme of land reform, the graduation of taxation and the removal of its burdens from the shoulders of the poor. The sanctity of public property, he claimed, took precedence of the sanctity of private property. He would have nothing to do with the theory that the working classes should show becoming meekness. And so on. The Whigs were in a panic, but in the country Chamberlain's bold bid for leadership aroused an abundant response. In regard to Ireland, he declared against the renewal of the Crimes Act. The right wing of the Cabinet demanded the

renewal, but proposed to accompany it by a Land Purchase Act and by a limited extension of local government. Here again Chamberlain and the Radicals were in opposition. They were against Land Purchase and demanded a strong measure of local government.

In this confusion of counsels, Harcourt still had not changed his opinion that the only alternatives were separation or government by force, and he desired the renewal of the Crimes Act on more drastic lines than those urged by Spencer, who wanted a mild Act and a handsome measure of local government, together with the abolition of the lord-lieutenancy, which mischievously associated the Crown with party politics. For the Lord Lieutenant he would substitute a Secretary of State. He also suggested an Irish Balmoral. Harcourt, while resisting the watering down of the Crimes Act, agreed (January 25) to an experiment in local government and to the reform of the viceroyalty and "the Castle." "But for the Duke of Wellington," he said, "it would have been done long ago." But he feared that the time for an Irish Balmoral had gone by. The Whigs, under Hartington, were opposed to any measure of local government; but Gladstone himself was moving with increasing momentum towards the conclusion to which his mind had been trending for years past. He agreed without enthusiasm to the renewal of the Crimes Act, but he told Granville (May 6) that, "independently of all questions of party, of support, or success" he looked upon the extension of a strong measure of local government to Ireland as "the only hopeful means of securing Crown and State from an ignominious surrender in the next Parliament." In this attitude Gladstone was supported by Spencer, who was now reinforced in the Irish Government by Campbell-Bannerman, who had succeeded Mr. (Sir) G. O. Trevelyan as Irish Secretary.

With these cross-currents running strongly the Government moved rapidly to dissolution. It is not remarkable that at this time Gladstone anticipated that when the split came he would have Chamberlain with him and Har-

court against him. Chamberlain had throughout represented the most advanced opinion on the Irish question, while Harcourt had been most insistent on force. His frame of mind was undoubtedly due to his official experience and his constant preoccupation with the dynamite danger in England. He had become the "head detective," and his mind was filled with his task to the exclusion of all schemes of conciliation. Every day was beset with new anxieties, threats from across the Atlantic, correspondence with the secret police, precautions for the safety of the Queen, of ministers and of public buildings, and in the midst of this whirl of duties coercion presented itself to his mind as the only possible policy.

An examination of the Home Office archives in connection with this time will sufficiently explain the anxieties amidst which he lived and the despair with which he surveyed the future. The outlook had never been more disquieting than now. There were explosions in Westminster Hall, the House of Commons and the Tower. "Our enemies are making rapid progress in the arts of attack, we none in those of defence," he wrote to Spencer (January 25). "O'Donovan Rossa and Ford send their men over when they like, and do just what they like." In America there poured out through the *United Irishman* a stream of virulent incitement to murder and outrage, and though diplomatic protests were made they had no influence against the weight of Irish sentiment in the United States. President Arthur, it is true, recommended to Congress "that the scope of the neutrality laws of the United States be so enlarged as to cover all patent acts of hostility committed in our territory and aimed against the peace of a friendly state." Arthur was then going out of office and could afford to be courageous, but his successor was as little likely as he had been to press this virtuous view in the face of the most powerful political caucus in the country. It was in vain that Harcourt kept the Foreign Minister and the Lord Chancellor supplied with ammunition on the subject, urging now this form of protest, now that, and offering the Most case as an example to the

United States of the conduct of our own Government in similar circumstances. Following the outrages came suggestions from the Queen to Harcourt that Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's, the British Museum, South Kensington and other places should be closed to the public. Harcourt did not adopt this course, but he sent out elaborate instructions to the police for protective measures. Sometimes a little gaiety enlivened these activities. Writing to the Lord Chancellor (Selborne), he said :

Harcourt to Selborne.

January 31.—I have to-night the mem. from Sir E. Henderson on the subject of the Law Courts. This mem. begins by stating that the building offers every possible facility for the perpetration of outrages, and concludes with the following paragraph :

" The Lord Chancellor's Secretary has undertaken to supervise and enforce the regulations inside the building. *Non equidem invideo, miror magis.*

I am a great admirer of civil courage and this splendid daring on the part of your private secretary seems to me worthy of Sidney Smith's character of Lord John Russell, who would operate for the stone or take command of the Channel fleet at a moment's notice. . . .

However, I need not say that I am very glad that you should take this responsibility off my hands. I am not surprised, however, that the judges should feel some trepidation at knowing that their lives are at the mercy of a *posse comitatus* of aged ushers, and that if anything happened at all events the dignity of the superintendent will have been saved. Anyhow it may lead to rapid promotion in the Bar which is always a good thing.

And when another " humble application " came from the Prime Minister's secretary requesting that " Mr. G." may be relieved from further affliction by dragons (detectives), Harcourt replied, " The master of many legions will do as he pleases. But as far as I am concerned I shall go on just the same, and if necessary place him in irons." Quite in another vein were the stream of messages from Windsor. " Is no notice to be taken of the open monstrous threat in a newspaper published in America by Irish to kill the Prince of Wales ? " was a cipher telegram typical of these communications to Harcourt, who meanwhile was writing (February 15) to G. W. Smalley, an American correspondent

in London, urging him to bring the facts of the Most case before the American public for their enlightenment as to our own policy towards incendiary aliens.

IV

The dissensions in the Cabinet reached a crisis in May. The grounds of disagreement were Egypt, Ireland and the Budget, and the Journal becomes a daily and almost hourly record of resignations and withdrawals and all the premonitions of catastrophe. On the 7th Selborne and Northbrook sent in their resignations on account of the final decision to evacuate Dongola, and on the same day Dilke and Chamberlain intimated that if Childers remained and continued with his Budget they would go. But it was Ireland which was the rock on which the Cabinet was going to pieces. The question of the renewal of the Crimes Act, which would expire in August, brought the whole issue of Irish government under review, and made disruption inevitable. The cross-currents were so numerous and so intense that the task of reconciling them in a common policy had become impossible. There were three main courses in view—the renewal of the Crimes Act, the adoption of a scheme of self-government under a Central Board in Dublin, and a Land Purchase Bill. The Whigs would not have the Central Board; the Radicals who wanted the Central Board would not have the Land Purchase Bill and would only consent on terms to a very attenuated Crimes Act; Gladstone, who disliked the Crimes Act, was anxious to have both the Central Board and Land Purchase; Spencer and Harcourt were primarily concerned about the Crimes Act, but were, in differing measure, ready to support the Central Board and Land Purchase.

The situation was made more obscure by a new development. The section of the Tory Party led by Churchill, formidable in influence if few in number, had begun a flirtation with the Irish vote, and through their leader expressed alarm at the prospect of the renewal of government by coercion. It was this factor in the situation which

largely influenced the change which now became apparent in Harcourt's attitude on Ireland. He had always maintained that there were only two alternatives, separation or government by force. But the second course involved practical agreement among the English parties. Already the powerful Radical element of the Liberal Party was hostile to force, and if the most aggressive section of the Conservative Party had begun to make terms with the Nationalists he saw that coercion as a policy could no longer be maintained. At the Cabinet meeting on May 9, Chamberlain produced his Central Council scheme for Ireland, which Parnell and the Irish bishops were willing to accept, and which Gladstone endorsed, but the majority of the Cabinet were hostile, and with its rejection the last chance of holding the Ministry together disappeared.

Extracts from the Journal will serve to indicate the commotion and conflicts that preceded the fall of the Government:

May 9.—Cabinet at 2 to-day, which went off well. Hartington has drawn up a statement which he will make on Monday announcing the entire and complete abandonment of Khartum and the Sudan. Northbrook has now no intention of resigning, and during the whole discussion Selborne said nothing, and seemed "as if absorbed in inward prayer."

Gladstone came to Grafton Street at 6.30 to tell W. V. H. that after he had left the Cabinet (which he did not do till he thought all the business was concluded) somebody asked what had been settled by the Cabinet Committee on the Crimes Bill, and Chamberlain said that if they had five minutes to spare he would explain his scheme, which he did from Mrs. O'Shea's MS. All the peers in the Cabinet and Hartington at once said that they would not agree to this, but it seems that Gladstone, Dilke, Shaw-Lefevre, Trevelyan and Childers are more or less inclined to support Chamberlain. Gladstone had come to say that he thought the position impossible, and now had finally made up his mind to resign as he would not consent to the renewal of the Crimes Act. He said his retirement would not be on that ground, and no one need know anything of the disagreements on the question, as he should resign simply on the ground of old age and of having completed the work for which he came into office—the passage of parliamentary reform.

May 10.— . . . He (Chamberlain) believes that his scheme of the Central Council offers a way out of the certain break-up of the Party,

which the Whigs ought gladly to accept and told me that after yesterday's Cabinet Gladstone said to him, " Did you ever see such men ? If God spares them for three years they will be on their knees repenting that they have not agreed to this." He says the most honest course to pursue would be for the Cabinet to accept his scheme *in toto*, or else let him and Dilke and Shaw-Lefevre resign, and then carry the renewal of the Crimes Bill with the help of the Tories. He says that if he and Dilke resigned they would probably go abroad together after making their speeches, and take no part in the House of Commons before the election, at which, however, they would press their views on Irish Government as strongly as possible. . . .

May 15.—Cabinet at 2 to-day. Spencer had intended to produce a Land Purchase Bill for Ireland this session, but at the Cabinet Chamberlain and Dilke said they would not have it without the Central Council, as their scheme had been that the Council should deal with this question and they do not wish to have it spoilt in this Parliament. So Chamberlain and Dilke resigned. W. V. H. with great difficulty induced them to stay, and then Spencer resigned, saying that all his schemes for the government of Ireland had been destroyed, and he had been thrown over by his colleagues, but ultimately W. V. H. induced him to withdraw his resignation, and Gladstone made a confused and confusing statement about the Crimes Bill in the House this afternoon, which made nothing clear except that the Coercion Bill would not be accompanied by any remedial legislation.

May 16.—Another Cabinet to-day. Childers has resigned. . .

May 19.—Cabinet crisis worse than ever. Childers determined to go directly after Whitsuntide, and only remains so long in order that his resignation may not have a bad effect on the Russian negotiations. He wrote to Gladstone yesterday that " the pain of political death " was over, and he should go when least inconvenient.

Dilke wrote to W. V. H. this morning that his one interest in official life was the pacification of Ireland, but since the last chance of doing this had been rejected by the Cabinet he has no further desire to remain in office, and his future interest in politics would be destroyed. He added that in the event of Hartington forming a Government neither he nor Chamberlain could join him.

Gladstone is absolutely determined to go at once, i.e. directly after Whitsuntide.

May 20.—W. V. H. has had a hard day's work at the H. of C. negotiating with Chamberlain, Dilke and Gladstone. He told the latter that if he could have a promise from him that he would remain Prime Minister till the end of the Session he thought he could arrange matters. G. gave him this pledge, and W. V. H. then saw Chamberlain and Dilke, and told them that if Gladstone was prepared to carry the present Budget through he (W. V. H.) could not quarrel

with him on a question of finance, much as he disliked the proposals. Dilke said if that was so he must also give way, as his resignation would necessarily take with it Chamberlain, who does not really care much about the Budget question one way or the other. . . .

Soon after this was all settled Chamberlain returned to W. V. H.'s room in a furious rage saying that he had been vilely tricked by Gladstone, who had just announced in the House that on reconsideration the Government had determined to introduce a Land Purchase Bill this Session. There seems to have been some extraordinary misunderstanding between Gladstone and Chamberlain. The former thought that the latter had consented in a conversation they had together to the introduction of a modified Purchase Bill, but Chamberlain says he told Gladstone that he would only consent to this on the production of his Central Council scheme. This condition is impossible as more than half the Cabinet would resign at once. . . . Chamberlain and Dilke on hearing this at once sent in their yellow boxes to Mr. Gladstone, resigning, but W. V. H. does not think they will persist in it. . . . Each section of the Cabinet thinks it has been betrayed on one subject or another by Gladstone : Chamberlain and Dilke say they have been tricked over the Land Purchase Bill ; Childers thinks he has been betrayed over his Budget ; Spencer thinks he has been abandoned on the Crimes Bill ; and Northbrook and Selborne believe they have been deceived on the Sudan policy. Nice materials these for a future Cabinet pudding !

May 22.— . . . The London Letter in to-day's *Birmingham Post* gives a full and minute account of the Cabinet crisis on the Irish Question. Mr. Gladstone, in a letter circulated to the Cabinet on the subject, said that these incidents in conjunction with the many anxieties of office make public life intolerable to him. W. V. H. is furious at this breach of faith, and says he will make no further effort to keep people who are capable of it with the rest of the Party.

June 5.—An extraordinary Cabinet at 11 this morning, chiefly on the Budget. They decided that the duty of spirits should be only 1*s.* instead of 2*s.*, and that the beer duty is only to be for one year, whereupon Childers jumped up saying, " I cannot stand this," and left the room. W. V. H. said, " We cannot let him go like this," and followed him to his room in the Treasury, where he was walking up and down in a state of great excitement. They were presently joined by Gladstone, and W. V. H. and Gladstone walked up and down the room on each side of Childers until he said he would take an hour to reconsider his position. They left him alone and then sent up Granville and Selborne, who, it is supposed, prayed with and over him. Ultimately he promised not to resign, so that crisis is over, but the Irish one is no better. [H.].

While these agonies were proceeding behind the scenes,

events in Parliament were foreshadowing the coming disaster. On a minor question the Government majority fell to two, and it was clear that any moment might be the last. Writing to Spencer, Harcourt describes the situation thus :

Harcourt to Spencer.

May 19.— . . . Things are no better here. The Cabinet seems like a man afflicted with epilepsy, and one fit succeeds another, each worse than the last. We had Childers *down* on Saturday moribund; and he was with difficulty picked up, but swears he will die, and no one shall save him from perishing with the Budget after Whitsuntide.

Poor Gladstone seems worn out—and no wonder. Every one wishes to go at once. But how, and why, and on what pretext ? The Party in the country and the House of Commons are united enough, and only anxious to support a Government which is resolved on suicide. To my mind this is the most inexplicable and unjustifiable state of things it is possible to conceive. The Liberal Party is like a first-rate man-of-war just going into a general action, the ship sound, the crew eager to fight and win, and the Captain looked up to with enthusiasm. Only the gentlemen in the gun-room insist on blowing out their own and others' brains just before going into action, and so the ship is captured. The mutiny at the Nore was nothing to it. . . .

On the Irish question no compromise seemed in sight. With the rejection of the Central Board scheme, Chamberlain and Dilke stood out stubbornly against coercion. They would not have a drastic Crimes Act, and insisted that the renewal should be only for one year, and that the Act should be operative only by special Order in Council. Whitsuntide came with the position still apparently hopeless, and Harcourt, who had gone to sea for the holiday and was " dodging about the Channel " in the steam yacht *Zingara,* wrote to Spencer from Plymouth Sound (May 31) that he had done all that he could to bring " parties and sections together," that he could do no more and that he was content " to leave the thing to be settled between you, Gladstone, Hartington and Dilke. My line will be to *stand by you.*" He was angry with Chamberlain and Dilke. He had never seen such an outburst of rage as they indulged in over the Land Purchase announcement, and had come to

the conclusion that " they were glad to have an opportunity to upset the coach."

In these circumstances Parliament reassembled. The conflict seemed narrowed down to the simple question whether the Crimes Act should be of general application or operative only by Special Order. While this point was still unsettled, the end came. On June 8 the Government were defeated on the Budget proposal to increase the duties on beer and spirits. The Cabinet unanimously and immediately decided to resign; but the Opposition, having with the help of the Irish vote succeeded in their aim, found themselves with the fruits of a hollow victory. If they took office they could only do so by grace of the Party they had defeated, and there followed anxious inquiries as to how far the Liberals were prepared to give assurances of support. Harcourt was opposed to assurances being given, and Gladstone writing to him (June 15) agreed that the Tories had not " the shadow of a rag of a tatter of a claim " and that " anything said or done must be in the face of day." The alternative was that Gladstone should resume the Government, and disagreeable as this alternative was, Harcourt thought it preferable to giving assurances of support to the Tories. Writing to Gladstone he said:

> Home Department, *June* 20.—I have (as you know *most reluctantly*) come to the conclusion that if Salisbury declines, as I suppose he will, you must consent to remain. It may possibly lead to disruption amongst ourselves on Ireland, as I have come to the conclusion (also most reluctantly) that the Tories have made any Crimes Bill impracticable. But we must face this as the least of the evils before us.
>
> If you feel called upon to obey the Queen's command to resume the Government, I think it is the duty of all your colleagues to do anything in their power to support you. . . .

The situation was complicated by the internal dissensions of the Conservative Party. Churchill's merciless persecution of " Marshall and Snelgrove " had ended the leadership of the gentle and kindly Northcote in the House of Commons, and when Salisbury took office Sir Stafford regretfully went

to the House of Lords as Earl of Iddesleigh. In writing to Harcourt (June 26) to thank him for "the uniform consideration and forbearance which you have always shown to me when I have attempted to cross swords with you at St. Stephen's," Northcote admitted that his departure from the House was "a great wrench" in his life, but no doubt it was for the best. His eclipse by the leader of Tory democracy had, however, much more than personal significance. It meant a startling change of attitude on Ireland which threatened a disruption in the Conservative Party. In these circumstances there was truth as well as wit in Harcourt's exposure, in a speech at St. James's Hall (June 16), of the situation of the Opposition:

> We find (he said) a set of discomfited victors who are furious with their victims because they have been defeated. (Laughter.) The Tories the other night brought up their last man. They made an alliance with a party with which they had nothing in common. (Hear, hear.) They had done for months and for years everything they could to thwart, embarrass, and defeat the Government, and at last they have destroyed it, and when they have succeeded they say "it's all your fault." (Great laughter.) It is as if there was a man behind a hedge with a musket and with an Irish confederate —(laughter)—who had been shooting at you day after day and night after night, who had missed you very often, and at last put his bullet in your heart, and then declared it was a case of suicide. (Laughter). . . . I see Conservative appeals, especially in the Conservative newspapers, to the Tory leaders not to take office. Why? Everything that we have done is wrong and everything that they are going to do will be right. Why, then, those craven fears? (Laughter.) Why these frantic alarms at their own shadows approaching? (Laughter.) I will tell you why. They are terrified at the echoes of the mischievous rubbish they have been talking. (Cheers.) They are brought face to face with the necessity of making good their words—or of eating them. (Laughter.) And, gentlemen, they will have to eat them. (Cheers and laughter.) I do not know whether it will be a palatable, I am sure it will be an abundant, diet. (Laughter and cheers.)

The speech was a devastating analysis of the Conservative declarations on Ireland, Egypt and Russia, but its main purpose was the exposure of Churchill's past utterances on Home Rule in the light of the change that had now been effected. The criticism delighted Gladstone, who asked

Lord R. Grosvenor that it should be reprinted. Referring to Harcourt's retort to Churchill, he said:

> . . . A month ago it would have been wrong to give him such prominence, but not now, when he is the second, if not more than the second person in the new combination, and is dancing upon poor and ill-used Northcote's prostrate body.

After unusual delay, Salisbury, having through the Queen received assurances that he would not be embarrassed in office, formed what Chamberlain nicknamed the "Government of Caretakers," and the crisis ended. On resigning, Gladstone had asked Harcourt if he might submit his name to the Queen for the G.C.B. as "the author of the great London Bill." Harcourt, in declining, said, "I have all the honour I desire in having served under you, and, as your letter kindly assures me, having earned your approval. I desire no other. Ribbons have no charm for me." In a letter of farewell to Harcourt (June 29), the Queen recalled a conversation she had had with him on the subject of the evils of excessive party feeling. "It was terrible to see," she said, "the right thing not done or approved merely because 'the party' required it, or the party must go against it because the other side had brought it forward, etc.," and she implored him not to forget this and "think, not only of the country but of herself, whose task is such a heavy one, and who so often cannot do the good she wishes from the very reason above stated." This drew from Harcourt a long and interesting reply on the true functions of party, in which he said:

Harcourt to the Queen.

> 7, GRAFTON STREET, *June* 30.— . . . In one sense Party Government is the essence of our parliamentary system, and without it we should fall into the political chaos which afflicts France and even Germany, where the representative body is broken up into a multitude of discordant and interested sections. . . .
>
> Sir William feels sure that Your Majesty would not desire that he should fail to work in a legitimate manner to advance the principles and interest of that great political party to which by sentiment and conviction he has been always attached, and which has advised and supported Your Majesty through far the larger part of your great and prosperous reign.

But though there is and always must be a necessary and wholesome antagonism between the principles and action of the two great political parties there lies between them an extensive neutral territory which is common to both—the attachment to Your Majesty's person and throne; the fundamental institutions of the country; the integrity and honour of the Empire; the safety of our foreign relations; all these so long as they are handled in a manner not to infringe vital principles ought to be treated as outside the pale of party conflict. The duty so to treat them is one which Sir William loyally acknowledges. The fact that of late this obligation has been too little observed gave rise to the observations to which Your Majesty has referred. But without going back to the past or indulging in unbecoming recrimination, Sir William confidently hopes that the present Opposition may set an example of fair dealing with the Government of the Queen which may be deserving of future imitation. . . .

V

The change of Government interrupted a cause in which Harcourt had been much engaged. For three years past the question of the crofters of Skye had given increasing anxiety. There had been constant conflicts with the police, and more than once the marines had been employed to give the officers protection. But while taking measures to preserve order, Harcourt did not conceal his view that the real culprits were the landowners who had turned off the people from the hills in order to enrich themselves first with sheep-walks and then with deer forests. He appointed a Royal Commission in 1884 to inquire into the discontents, but no satisfactory proposal emerged, and then he insisted on the Scottish landowners meeting to consider in what way they could meet the grievances of the crofters. In the meantime the agitation and the accompanying disorders continued, and Harcourt was pressed to take the high hand with the movement. The Queen made frequent inquiries on the subject, and referring to one of Harcourt's speeches in the House regretted that he did not favour emigrating the crofters. In his reply Harcourt expressed himself on the causes of the trouble with generous warmth:

Harcourt to the Queen.

HOME DEPARTMENT, *November* 23, 1884.— . . . The great misfortune has been that one or two hard men (whom Sir William does

not desire to name) have brought discredit on their class by conduct which nothing can justify—as for instance the wringing from these poor people of rent for the sea-weed they gather on the shore, and a charge for the peats with which they keep life together in their miserable cabins."

The immediate cause of the disturbances in Skye has been the raising of the rents on one estate from £3,000 to £7,000 a year, an increase which the people are quite unable to bear.

The remarks which Sir William made on the subject of emigration seem to have been misunderstood, though their true interpretation was properly stated by the Duke of Argyll in his speech. Sir William was far from intending to deprecate assistance rendered by the proprietors or others to persons who desired to seek their future in the Colonies. He only desired to protest against seeking a remedy for the grievances of the crofters by a system of *State Emigration* which should have for its object to improve the Highlands by getting rid of the Highlanders. Sir William feels sure that Your Majesty will approve his sentiments in thinking that this would be a desperate and worthless remedy. The Highlands in former days supported in a rude state, but still in comparative comfort, a population of sturdy and loyal men who played a great part in the founding of Your Majesty's Empire. Sir William was much struck the other day in reading a letter of Dr. Johnson's to Mrs. Thrale in the year 1772 in which he says, speaking of the Island of Muck (a small, confined island off Skye): "We were invited one day by the Laird and Lady of Muck, one of the Western Islands two miles long and three-quarters of a mile high. He has half his island in his own culture, and upon the other half live 150 *dependants*, who not only live upon the product but export corn sufficient for the payment of rent."

There is no Laird or Lady in Muck, the 150 dependants who exported produce are gone, and there is one shepherd in the island. Your Majesty has so many contented and prosperous Highland subjects the less; the proprietors have probably so many pounds of the rent the more. The landlord is richer, the nation is poorer by the transaction.

This is what has happened to a great degree throughout the West Highlands. In former days the hills were not available for high rents of game and grazing. The people were therefore allowed to feed their cattle upon them. They were comfortable and content, loyal to their chiefs, paying some small acknowledgment in kind for the privileges they enjoyed. But when it was found that the hills could be let as sheep farms or deer forests, then poor people were driven off and confined to their little arable patches on which they could live. They ceased to be a pastoral people and became tillers of the soil in a climate uncongenial to cultivation. They therefore began to starve, and therefore when the potato famine came died

in hundreds and were exported by thousands. Landlords who had rent rolls of a few hundreds turned them into as many thousands. Most of them ruined themselves by their extravagance, induced by the sudden growth of their wealth. The Clanronalds, the Glengarry, the Seaforths, are ruined and have disappeared. Their land has been sold to strangers, mostly non-resident, and the fate of the people is disposed of by factors, many of whom (especially in Skye) are extremely harsh and unjust in their proceedings, thinking only how the uttermost farthing can be extracted from the small tenants. This is the history of an estate where disturbances have arisen in Skye. It was bought thirty years ago by a proprietor who does not live there, and who has screwed up the rents to double the amount at which he found them. The real remedy of this unhappy state of things is, Sir William believes, not to proceed to exterminate the people in order to get rid of their poverty, but to enable them by a partial return to the old state of things to live in their own country in the condition of contentment and happiness which they once enjoyed and which they might enjoy again. All that is necessary is out of these vast tracts of desert sheep farms and deer forests to allot a small fraction of hill grazings to these poor people which will enable them to live. . . .

Sir William, turning to another subject, asks leave to congratulate Your Majesty on the signal success which has attended Your Majesty's efforts to secure a peaceful solution of the Reform question. The result—though its causes may never be fully made known—show how powerful is the influence of the Crown constitutionally exercised to avert by its authority and mediation dangerous political conflicts and to sustain the organic institutions of the country.

The Queen was not convinced, insisted on the importance of emigration, and said it would never do to encourage the crofters in "their wild and impossible demands, the result to a great extent of *Irish agitators*' persistent preaching of sedition." To the Marquis of Lorne, who had called for stern measures and denounced the "canting and blasphemous ministers" who had "preached sedition," Harcourt sent a powerful rebuke in which he reviewed the history of the Highlands in sombre and moving terms. To Gladstone he wrote (January 17, 1885) with equal emotion, evoking a response no less charged with indignation against the true causes of the trouble. In May a Bill designed to mitigate the grievances of the crofters was introduced in the House of Commons and read a first time, but with the fall of the Government it was abandoned, the new Ministry declining

to take it over. The Bill brought in by Sir George Trevelyan early in 1886, which became law by the summer, provided fair rent and fixity of tenure for the crofters, but made no arrangement for purchase. Leases, however, were made compulsory, and were arranged under the supervision of a commissioner.

In regard to two other measures Harcourt was more successful. A Bill to remove the disqualification in connection with the franchise imposed by the receipt of medical relief was abandoned by the new Government on the inclusion of surgical aid in the Bill. Thereupon Harcourt made himself responsible for the Bill, which became law without amendment. He also, after much correspondence with Cross, who had succeeded him at the Home Office, induced the new Government to take over the Criminal Law Amendment Bill as a Government measure, which raised the age of consent on the part of a young girl to sixteen.

Before turning to the situation created by the fall of the Government, and the momentous developments that followed, some personal details relating to this time may be conveniently referred to. In a letter to Gladstone Harcourt says :

> 7, Grafton Street, *January* 1.— . . . I am delighted to hear of your daughter's marriage. I think all *women* are better married —a sentiment for which I was much reproved by my Sovereign when I expressed it to her on the occasion of her last daughter's marriage. She said, " I entirely differ from you, Sir W. I think no woman should marry except under exceptional circumstances." I replied, " Madam, you are as bad as Q. Elizabeth, except that she was never married." H.M. was, I think, rather pleased at the comparison. I married very poor, and was very happy. . .

Harcourt was much of a courtier, and never omitted those little attentions which kept Majesty in good temper. " *WE* like congratulations on another grandchild," wrote Ponsonby to him in announcing the birth of a princess to Princess Louis of Battenberg, but the hint was not needed to one who seized any pleasant occasion for congratulating anybody, and above all the Queen.

As his experience at the Home Office lengthened Har-

court's dislike of savage sentences increased, and to the Lord Chief Justice (Coleridge) he wrote (January 16) urging "the cause of mercy at the bar of the judges." He believed that no good was really done to a prisoner by penal servitude of more than five years. "Few judges I believe realize what ten years' penal servitude mean. . . . Still less is it understood what a tremendous penalty is two years' hard labour in the ordinary prison."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE 1885 ELECTION

The Irish Party—The Carnarvon *pourparlers*—Chamberlain at Inverness—Harcourt at Blandford—The Hawarden manifesto —The Radicals and the Whigs—Opposition at Derby—Results of the Elections.

THE new Government had come in with two tasks—to wind up the Parliament and go to the country. There was no doubt as to the issue that would dominate the election. The Irish Party had now through the genius of Parnell established itself as the *tertium quid* of English politics, and whatever happened to Liberals and Tories in the coming conflict Parnell would be the winner. A profound change had come over the situation which made the ultimate issue, however long delayed, assured. It is not necessary here to enter into the much-debated question of the negotiations between the Conservatives and Parnell that are alleged to have preceded Gladstone's resignation. That there were *pourparlers* of some kind is undoubted, and the attitude adopted by Churchill in the Maamtrasna debate, and on the question of the renewal of the Crimes Act, showed that an election deal with the Parnellites was in contemplation. That suspicion became confirmed with the advent of the Salisbury Government to office. It was known that the new Viceroy, Lord Carnarvon, had had a private meeting with Parnell on taking office, and, though it was denied that a bargain had been struck, the dropping of the Crimes Act and the remarkable speech of Carnarvon in the House of Lords in which, in the presence of the Prime Minister, he repudiated government by force,

pointed to the success of free institutions in the Colonies, and said he saw "no irreconcilable bar to the unity and amity of the two nations," made it clear that a new departure in Conservative policy was in view.

There was, as the event showed, a large measure of insincerity in all this. Carnarvon himself was undoubtedly sincere, but it is probable that in this respect he stood almost alone among his colleagues. In spite of the memorable speech of Salisbury at Newport in the following September, in which the Conservative leader appeared to endorse Carnarvon's attitude towards Ireland, there was a widespread conviction that the country was only in the presence of a peculiarly audacious political manœuvre, and that there was no real change of heart in the rank and file of the Conservative Party. Indeed at Liverpool a meeting which was to have been addressed by Churchill had to be abandoned owing to the opposition of Lord Claude Hamilton and the Orange element. But, whether honest or dishonest, this startling *bouleversement* enormously enhanced Parnell's position. Gladstone was notoriously hostile to coercion, and had been feeling his way for years along the path of conciliation. The most vital element in the party was entirely with him in this policy, and there seemed little doubt that in due course the Whigs under Hartington, who were opposed to Home Rule in any form, would be shed, and that the Liberal party would be committed to some measure of self-government for Ireland. Now the sudden surrender of the Conservative leaders left the policy of coercion in ruins. Parnell was quick to turn his good fortune to account. He saw both the English parties eager for his support and he put up the terms. From the late Government he had been prepared to accept a Central Council at Dublin for the administration of Irish affairs. Now he declared for an Irish Parliament and an Irish Executive.

Meanwhile the confusion in the Liberal counsels became aggravated as the election approached. Gladstone had, on the rising of Parliament, gone on a voyage to Norway

in Brassey's yacht, the *Sunbeam*, and Harcourt's son, who was with him, writing to his father, said:

L. V. Harcourt to W. V. Harcourt.

August 27.— . . . Mr. G. is obviously determined *not* to come forward for the elections *unless* he is specifically asked to do so by his late colleagues—especially by Hartington and Chamberlain as representing the two wings of the Party. I gather that he is somewhat disappointed that Hartington at all events has not done this, and he seems to feel that it is hardly fair to H. that he should again come forward to "take the bread out of his mouth." Please write to Mr. G. [to Hawarden] yourself and make the others [Cabinet] do so too. . . .

But the political relations of Hartington and Chamberlain were becoming so strained that their further co-operation seemed impossible. It was not the new terms of Parnell on which they disagreed. Both declared their hostility on this subject. But on questions of domestic policy, and especially on the land, they were drifting far apart. Chamberlain was appealing to the country on free education, "three acres and a cow," the granting of power to local authorities to acquire land, and a graduated income tax. At Waterfoot, Hartington brusquely dismissed the idea of arbitrarily or forcibly redistributing the land, and Chamberlain retaliated at Inverness in a speech in which he said:

. . . When public rights are invaded, when rights of way, and roads which have been open within the memory of living men, are barred and blocked, and when a whole country which has been free for countless generations is barred and fenced against all intruders, in order to promote the sport of a few selfish individuals, then I ask myself, and I ask you, whether the policy of confiscation has not proceeded far enough, and whether the people are alone to be robbed with impunity.

In this rupture, Harcourt sought to play the part of peacemaker, urging Chamberlain, on the one hand, to be moderate—"you have no idea how moderate you can be *till you try*"—and, on the other, appealing to Hartington to ignore Chamberlain's asperities as "outbursts of temper." And when at Bradford Chamberlain referred to "Rip Van Winkle," Harcourt wrote pointing out that this sort of thing

"sticks in Hartington's gizzard." The truth was that the rupture had gone beyond healing, and Harcourt, too, found himself drifting away from Hartington. The latter was conscious of this, and writing to Granville [1] (October 3) said:

> . . . There is one thing, and I believe only one, in which I agree with Harcourt, which is that the Peers, who never do a day's work out of office, can't expect half the places in another Liberal Cabinet. . . . I am to see Harcourt to-morrow, but he appears to have definitely decided to go with Chamberlain. . . .

It was Harcourt's speech at Blandford on September 28—following a non-committal one at Plymouth on September 17—which had driven Hartington to this conclusion. In this speech Harcourt had associated himself with Chamberlain's land policy. The wrongs of the crofters had bitten into his mind, and he contrasted the scene from the Rigi with the scene from the no less beautiful Scottish mountains. Why was the one so prosperous and the other so desolate? The Swiss peasant was not dependent for his livelihood on the precarious weekly wage. To his mind it was not a sound condition of affairs when the mass of the people had not homes which they could call their own. The agricultural labourer ought to have a home from which he could not be turned out; a man should feel that when he died he had a home to leave to his family. Mr. Stanhope had said, "just fancy what a dreadful thing that would be if the House of Commons consisted entirely of Jesse Collingses." But, asked Harcourt, had he ever considered what it would be if it consisted entirely of Edward Stanhopes. This speech evoked from Chamberlain an enthusiastic letter of congratulation.

In the meantime Gladstone had returned to the hornets' nest from his Norwegian cruise, and, writing to Harcourt in reference to Hartington and Chamberlain, said:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

HAWARDEN CASTLE, *September* 12.— . . . By both of them I am a good deal buffeted, perhaps the former even more than the

[1] Holland, *Life of the Duke of Devonshire* (Macmillan, 1911), vol. ii., p. 73.

latter. They are in states of mind such as, if they were put in contact, would lead to an explosion. Both I think are wrong in this, that they write as if they were fixing the platform of a new Liberal Government, whereas I am solely endeavouring to help, or not to embarrass, Liberal candidates for the election. The question of a Government may have its place later on, not now.

Having explained the general idea with which I propose to write [his manifesto], I asked H. and C. whether it was upon the whole their wish that I should go on or cut out. To this question I have not yet got a clear affirmative answer from either of them.

Chamberlain has his ulterior views, with which, so far as I understand them, I am not much in sympathy; Hartington seems to be in a jealous frame of mind, and has I think been at Kimbolton.

In his manifesto to the Midlothian electors, Gladstone gave his distracted party a lead between the conflicting policies of Hartington and Chamberlain, and pleaded for a reconciliation between England and Ireland, insisting that "every grant to portions of the country of enlarged powers for the management of their own affairs is, in my view, not a source of danger, but a means of averting it, and is in the nature of a new guarantee for increased cohesion, happiness, and strength."

"Gladstone's manifesto has put me in high spirits about politics," wrote Harcourt to his wife, and to Gladstone he said:

Stoney Cross, Lyndhurst, *September* 21.— . . . I am sure it must be a source of satisfaction to see how the whole Party has rallied to your standard as soon as it was raised from the negative pole of Goschen to the positivism of Chamberlain. I have never doubted that you are the only universal amalgam, and that without you, as the Yankees say, the "bottom of the tub would come out." . . . The red hair of Argyll must have been blanched by Chamberlain's speech at Inverness.

To Chamberlain, Harcourt wrote (September 24) congratulating him on his speeches. "You have conquered a position of vantage from which you can never be displaced. . . . The more the Tories abuse you the stronger you are and will be." But he urged him to stand by the "G.O.M." The "umbrella" had answered very well and was necessary

to the party. As for himself, he agreed that the compulsory acquisition of land by local authorities and free education were indispensable. But Chamberlain was dissatisfied with the manifesto, and said he had told Gladstone he would join no Government in which he and Dilke had not a free hand on local government, including powers for the compulsory acquisition of land and liberty to speak and vote on free education. Harcourt saw Gladstone and was able to assure Chamberlain that he was not opposed to free education or the compulsory acquisition of land. But Chamberlain still had difficulties. He suspected intrigues between Hartington and Goschen, and he complained of the absence of the Liberal peers from the field. Was the next Cabinet to consist in equal proportion of men for whose opinion no living soul cared a straw?

Harcourt was still struggling to hold the Gladstonian umbrella over the warring Whigs and Radicals, assuring Hartington that Chamberlain only demanded a "free vote and voice" for his policy in the Cabinet, and telling Chamberlain that Hartington's "bark is worse than his bite and when it comes to the point he usually does what is satisfactory." But it was to little purpose. If Hartington wanted war, wrote Chamberlain to Harcourt (October 9), he could have it. If he liked to try his hand at doing without the Radicals and relying on Goschen, then Dilke and Morley and he (Chamberlain) would formulate a still more definite and advanced policy and would run a Radical in every constituency. He had been to Hawarden with his conditions, and seemed fairly satisfied with their reception. In discussing Chamberlain's programme, Harcourt (October 30) foreshadowed the direction his mind was taking on taxation: "My action (he wrote) will be, as it has always been, to try to keep the crew together. As you will have seen, I am with you on *Free Education* and substantially on the *Land*. As to *Taxation*, I am not sure that I understand your view fully. My own disposition is rather towards a *property* tax than increased burthens on *income*."

As the election approached, Harcourt took the field. At

Winchester on November 7 he devoted himself to the land question, urging the increase of small holdings, and the compulsory acquisition of land at a fair price; at Chester on November 11 he attacked Churchill, defended free trade, and pronounced for free education; at Manchester on November 18 he dealt mainly with the fair trade heresy and the vagaries of Lord Randolph Churchill. In the midst of the pollings he spoke at Eastbourne and Lowestoft. It was in the latter speech that he used a phrase of which he was to hear much later, especially from the lips of Chamberlain. Dealing with the new association of the Tories with Parnell, he said that early in the year inquiries had gone out from Tory headquarters to ascertain the strength of the Irish vote in the constituencies. That information having been obtained, it was determined not to renew the Crimes Act, and that news was communicated to Parnell, and Parnell then assisted them to turn out the Government. Mr. Parnell must in fact be consulted on every measure, because without his support the Government would not be safe for a day. "They have got the vote at the election; that has been paid. That was the price for dropping the Crimes Act. That was the price for denouncing Lord Spencer. . . . But there is another bargain yet to be made. They want the vote in the House of Commons. We want to know what is the price to be paid for that. . . ." And then he proceeded:

> . . Before they (the Tory Government) are turned out there is a thing that is to be done, and that is that they should be thoroughly found out. For my part, what I desire is to allow them for a few months to stew in their own Parnellite juice. And then, gentlemen, when they stink in the nostrils of the country—as they will stink, we will fling them disgraced and discredited to the constituencies.

At this time it seemed that the election had gone against the Liberals. The boroughs had pronounced for the Tories, and Hartington wrote to Granville [1] (November 29), "I am dying to ask Harcourt what he thinks of the infallible

[1] *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*, ii. 95.

Schnadhorst now. I fully expect he will say it is all my fault." But all was not over. The county results as they came in redressed the balance, and Chamberlain wrote triumphantly to Harcourt that the "cow" had done well. What was wanted was a "cow" for the boroughs. Harcourt, still hoping to keep the peace, wrote (December 4) to Hartington, who was about to deliver a speech, urging him not to retort upon Chamberlain's latest outburst of temper. "I take it he is furious at the defeat of his brother in Worcestershire. . . . Take my advice. . . . There will always be time enough for the row when it is inevitable." But Hartington was not to be mollified. Replying to Harcourt, he said he had read Chamberlain's "atrocious" speech and should probably answer it.

In the meantime Harcourt had been re-elected for Derby, but only after a stiff fight against the most unscrupulous tactics. A fourth candidate, Dyer, had appeared in the field, and his candidature was sustained by suggestions that Harcourt as Home Secretary had supported the C.D. Acts, and that he had been at least lukewarm in supporting the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The indignation aroused by these methods led Gladstone, James, and the Earl of Dalhousie, who had represented the Home Office in the House of Lords, to write letters to the Derby electors rebutting the slander. The plain facts were that the C.D. Acts had been in abeyance for two years, and that the Criminal Law Amendment Bill had been brought forward by Harcourt, and that it was to further its passage that he had pressed his successor at the Home Office to take it over from him as a Government measure. The result of the poll was sufficiently emphatic:

T. Roe	7,813
Harcourt	7,630
Hextall	4,943
Dyer	1,251

The result of the general election revealed an extraordinary condition of stalemate, the state of parties being:

1- 1910

Liberals and Independents	335
Conservatives	249
Home Rulers	86

A coalition between the Conservatives and the Irish members thus would mean a tie, or a majority of one for the party not supplying the Speaker. It was a triumph for Parnell, who on the eve of the election had issued a manifesto to the Irish electors in England calling on them to vote for the Conservatives. By this step he had made himself in a very real sense the master of the situation. But there was much, nevertheless, to justify Harcourt's claim in *The Times* that the election was a notable victory for Liberalism. The Irish vote, he said, was a temporary windfall to the Tories; the really significant fact was the sweeping Liberal victory in the counties, due in part to the unpopularity of the country parsons, but mainly to the knowledge that the Tory Party would, if they could, have prevented the rural householder from obtaining the vote which he had now used to such advantage, and to the persistent hostility over a series of generations of that Party to the rights of the poor in common land.

But though, as between the Liberals and Conservatives, the result of the election had been sufficiently decisive, it was equivocal on the main issue of politics, and the country awaited with gathering interest the disclosure of the conclusions which Gladstone, in the seclusion of Hawarden, was seeking in regard to his victory and its meaning.

CHAPTER XXV

HOME RULE IN THE BALANCE

The Carnarvon Interview—Gladstone's hesitations—Vain hope of removing Irish question from party strife—Cross-currents among Liberals—Chamberlain's jealousy—General irritation at Gladstone's reticence—A meeting at Devonshire House—Discussion with Gladstone at last—Three Acres and a Cow Amendment.

THE election of 1885 is the outstanding landmark in the modern political history of the country. It made Ireland the governing issue of British politics. The stages to this crowning achievement had been clearly marked. When in 1868 the Irish members separated from the Liberal Party and assumed the position of an independent group they initiated a policy that drove a wedge into the English political system that was destined sooner or later to shatter it in fragments. Parnell had now driven the wedge home, and had brought victory within his grasp. He had played so skilfully upon the rivalries of the two great political groups that opposition to Irish self-government had been largely disintegrated, and it seemed that the concession of that policy might easily be extracted from either party or from both. It would not be too much to claim that Parnell's most powerful ally had been Joseph Chamberlain, who, throughout the 1880–5 Parliament, had been hostile to coercion and insistent on a policy of conciliation, had preserved close relations with Parnell, had arranged the so-called Kilmainham Treaty, and had finally, with Gladstone's consent, put forward a scheme for a National Council for the control of Irish domestic affairs.

But it was the Tory bid for the Irish vote in the summer

of 1885 that turned the current of victory finally in Parnell's favour. When long afterwards (January 23, 1893) Harcourt was talking with Churchill at Lord Rothschild's house at Tring, Churchill said, "Gladstone was obliged to take up Home Rule the moment he heard of Lord Carnarvon's interview with Parnell, which was Salisbury's doing." It is probable that those negotiations were largely disingenuous. The Irish vote in England was necessary if the Conservatives were to drive Gladstone from power, and it was this consideration rather than a change of heart on Irish government that led to that momentous departure. But whatever the dominant motive, and whoever was the inspirer—and there is abundant evidence that Churchill himself originated the idea of an alliance with the Parnellites—the fact changed the complexion of British politics on the Irish question. Thenceforward, up to the election, the Conservative Codlin rather than the Liberal Short was the friend of Ireland. The Ashbourne Land Purchase Act, the dropping of Coercion by the Salisbury Administration, the remarkable Newport speech of Salisbury in which he expressed his preference for a National Council as against provincial councils, and, to the astonishment of the public, talked of boycotting as if it were a mild epidemic to which the best of peoples might be subject—all this was showering blessings on Parnell. He seemed suddenly embarrassed with political suitors. It was only a question of which horse he should ride, and as a good strategist he preferred to mount the Conservative horse, of whose good faith he had doubts, but which he was anxious to commit to the task of carrying his colours. He cut his Liberal connection without hesitation. Chamberlain and Dilke had contemplated a tour in Ireland under his auspices during the recess; but the arrangement broke down as a consequence of Parnell's new and calculated friendship.

It would be interesting but unprofitable to speculate as to what would have happened had the Irish vote been sufficient to give the Conservatives plus the Irish a substantial majority in Parliament. The attempt to carry

out the understanding with the Irish would no doubt have produced a serious rupture in the Conservative Party, which was much less prepared for a reversal of Irish policy than the Liberal Party was; but the attempt would have had to be made, and the fact could not have failed to change the course of history. The idea of a reconciliation with Ireland on the basis of self-government would have become the common property of both parties, and would have removed from the strictly party conflict the issue which dominated it for the next thirty-five years. But the Irish vote did not achieve all that the Conservatives had in mind. It transferred many seats to them, but it did not give them, even with the Irish contingent, a command of the House. That Salisbury was perplexed by the course he should pursue may be assumed from the fact that he did not resign forthwith, but decided to meet Parliament after Christmas.

But if he was perplexed his great antagonist at Hawarden had no easy problem to solve. The difficulty in his case was not as to the goal but as to the means of attaining it. Ever since he had come to power in 1868 his mind had been moving steadily and uninterruptedly in the direction of a solution of Irish grievances by the consent of the Irish people. He began with his attack on the Irish Church and Irish landlordism, and, when these reforms left the Irish demand still unsatisfied, continued with infinite patience to feel his way towards the core of the discontents. Throughout the last Parliament he had yielded unwillingly to the coercive measures which events had made unavoidable, and had struggled to accompany them with a policy of appeasement directed towards placating Irish national feeling. The result of the election, with the unanimous and overwhelming verdict of Nationalist Ireland, cleared all the lingering hesitations and doubts from his mind. It made Home Rule not merely a matter of practical politics, but the capital task of British statesmanship. The equivocal situation of parties in the new House, coupled with the changed orientation of the Conservative Party on the subject, suggested to his mind that the settlement of the question might be

removed from the field of party warfare, and reached by common consent. During the December days following the election he broached the idea to his son and to certain of his colleagues, and, meeting Mr. Arthur Balfour at the Duke of Westminster's at Eaton, sounded him on the subject. It soon became apparent, however, that there was not much hope in this direction, and that the brief flirtation of the Conservative leaders with Parnellism had not survived the disappointment of the election. Thereupon he turned to the accomplishment of the task on party lines. Superficially the prospects of success seemed promising. He had a majority of eighty-six over the Conservatives in the House of Commons, and the Irish Nationalists placed a reserve of eighty-six votes at his command on a policy of Irish conciliation, but gave a tie in case of a combination between the Conservatives and the Irish, or more strictly a margin of one, allowing for the Speaker.

This rosy calculation was subject to very formidable qualifications. It was true that the powerful Radical element of the Liberal Party had long made the running in favour of an accommodation with Ireland, and that Liberal thought in the country had become largely permeated with the idea of some measure of Home Rule. The coquetting of the Tories with the Parnellites had strengthened this tendency, and had convinced many, among them Harcourt, that coercion as a means of governing Ireland was no longer tenable, and that government by consent was the only course now open. But there were still powerful and obdurate hostile elements within the party, both in Parliament and outside. The victory at the polls had been won not on the Irish question, but on domestic issues. The " unauthorized programme " of Chamberlain, and especially that section known as " three acres and a cow," had had a large share in the result, and it remained to be seen how far Gladstone could carry his battalions with him in the pursuit of an object not associated with English issues, and on which the Liberal Party was gravely divided. In his calculations he had to reckon with the unqualified hostility of Hartington

and Goschen, but he had reason to assume that the Radicals would be with him, that the centre group of the party of which Harcourt was the chief spirit might also come on his side, and that thus he would be enabled to carry his policy even while shedding the Whigs. In any case it seemed that the Cabinet could not hold both Hartington and Chamberlain. Their acerbities, especially on the question of the English land laws, had assumed during the election the character of a public and fundamental quarrel outside the scope of party accommodation. From the point of view of Liberal feeling in the country it was Chamberlain who was essential to the Government rather than Hartington, and Chamberlain was sympathetic with Irish aspirations while Hartington was an incurable sceptic as to the Irish capacity for self-government.

But the differences between Hartington and Chamberlain on English domestic policy did not imply agreement by Chamberlain with Gladstone on Irish policy. He had noticeably reacted from his Irish position after the breakdown of his proposed tour in Ireland during the recess, and still more after the new claim which Parnell had set up as the result of the Conservative bid for the Irish vote. The following extract from the Journal indicates also that he was nettled at the idea—apparently quite erroneous—that Gladstone was negotiating new terms with the Irish on his own account :

December 9.—Chamberlain came to dine with us this evening, and is brimming over with differences, grievances, soreness, etc. He announced that the split between himself and Hartington could never be patched up and had better take place now, as it was quite impossible for them ever to sit in the same Cabinet again. He said Hartington had been personally offensive to him in his speeches during the autumn. W. V. H. pointed out that he, Chamberlain, had been equally offensive, and that it was impossible to decide who had begun it. Chamberlain said he knew his last speech at Leicester was "nasty," and he had meant it to be so. W. V. H. half laughed at and half scolded him, said that they were like husband and wife, who alternately nagged at one another, that it was a case of incompatibility of temper, and that they must get over it somehow or other. Chamberlain then began to denounce Gladstone. He

knows that a Home Rule scheme is in the air, and declares that G. has negotiated the whole thing with the Parnellites through a third person, probably Herbert Gladstone, and that he, Chamberlain, has seen a letter in which Gladstone says, " It will probably take me some time to obtain the consent of my Whig colleagues, though I do not despair of doing so." Chamberlain is furious at having been told nothing about this and having the negotiations conducted behind his back, and said that nothing will induce him to consent to any arrangement which is arrived at with the Parnellites, that he will be no party to it, and that he has entirely given up his Irish policy of last summer. [H.]

A few days later the bolt fell. In the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Standard* of December 16 there appeared an apparently inspired statement, emanating from his son, that Gladstone was contemplating a plan which " provides for the establishment of a Parliament in Dublin for dealing with purely Irish affairs." Gladstone promptly dismissed the statement as " merely a speculation " on his views, but the terms of the denial only confirmed the essential accuracy of the statement. Its premature disclosure had instant and far-reaching reactions. It alarmed the Whigs, and cleared the course for the Conservatives. On the announcement of Gladstone's intentions Churchill was reported to have said, apropos of whether the Tory Government would proceed with Home Rule, " Oh no, we will have nothing to do with Home Rule of any kind now ; we have got Gladstone pinned to it ; we will make him expose his scheme in the House of Commons. Let him defeat us with the aid of the Parnellites, and then let us dissolve and go to the country with the cry of ' The Empire in Danger.' " Harcourt was at Chatsworth with Hartington when the Hawarden mine was so unintentionally sprung, and next day, in reply to the request for information of his intentions, there came to Hartington a letter from Gladstone [1] in which he gave the following conditions of an admissible plan of Home Rule :

1. Union of the Empire and due supremacy of Parliament.
2. Protection for the minority. A difficult matter on which I have talked much with Spencer, certain points, however, remaining to be considered.

[1] Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, Book ix., chap. iii.

3. Fair allocation of Imperial charges.

4. A statutory basis seems to me better and safer than the revival of Grattan's Parliament, but I wish to hear more upon this, as the minds of men are still in so crude a state on the whole subject.

5. Neither as opinions nor as intentions have I to anyone alive promulgated these ideas as decided on by me.

6. As to intentions, I am determined to have none at present—to leave space to the Government—I should wish to encourage them if I properly could—above all, on no account to say or do anything which would enable the Nationalists to establish rival biddings between us.

II

From the indignation which boiled over at Chatsworth, Harcourt went on with his son, two days later, to the equally angry atmosphere of Highbury, carrying some heat of his own along with him. He found Chamberlain, as the following notes from the Journal indicate, torn between two antagonisms :

December 20.—J. C. declares most positively that direct negotiations have been carried on through Herbert Gladstone with Parnell, Healy, O'Brien and Harrington, and says that he (J. C.) has seen some of the letters.

Chamberlain is anxious to throw over Gladstone, or rather to get Hartington to do so, but will not promise to support the latter afterwards. In fact, he said he would never support another Coercion Bill. . . .

December 19.— . . . At breakfast this morning J. C. was very bitter about the Moderates, and would do anything to have a fight with them, and declares he will not enter another Cabinet in which they have the preponderance. [H.]'

Harcourt was still uncommitted, angry with Hawarden, angry with Highbury, but working for a *modus vivendi.* From Highbury he wrote to Hartington (December 20) reporting his conversations with Chamberlain, and discussing the wisdom of presenting Gladstone with " a peremptory negative " to his proposal. Chamberlain, he thought, was prepared for this, but they had to bear in mind certain grave contingencies. If Gladstone could not carry his colleagues he might take the occasion to retire ; but he would first deliver his soul. " He would say that in leaving public life he felt bound etc. to bear testimony to the only

plan which would heal the wounds of Ireland." What would follow the rejection of the scheme? The policy of violence in Ireland would break out in aggravated form:

> . . . Chamberlain I think is of opinion that this might be endured and overcome—though he admits that in the process the Irish landlords and their rents must be extinguished. I confess I doubt if the resistance could be overcome. The name and authority of Mr. G. would be appealed to as showing that reasonable demands had been refused, and would be regarded as a palliation if not a justification of the violence and outrages of a nation unable to obtain its just rights.
>
> Then when all these evils arose and measures of extraordinary repression became necessary, people would turn round upon us and say, "if you had followed the advice of Mr. G. this would not have happened. You have brought this upon yourselves." . . .

He adds significantly that Chamberlain and Dilke "resent that Mr. G. should have committed himself and the Party to such an extent without any consultation with his colleagues, and I am not surprised at it." Returning to London, Harcourt found that the Hawarden plans had spread panic in exalted quarters.

On December 22 Ponsonby called on him, and said the Queen was much alarmed at the reports of Gladstone's Home Rule scheme, but recognized that the present Government could not last long, and admitted that its successor should be a Liberal one. Her idea was that "extremes" (meaning Gladstone and R. Churchill) should be got rid of, that Hartington should be Prime Minister and Salisbury Foreign Secretary under him, the whole of the rest of the Cabinet being Liberal and Whig. Of course Harcourt told Ponsonby how utterly impossible such a thing would be, and Ponsonby seems to have said the same thing to the Queen. Meanwhile Harcourt's letters to Hartington indicated that, much as he disliked the new plunge, his mind was moving towards its acceptance as a matter of political necessity. Writing on December 22, he analysed the consequences which were involved in the Gladstone proposal:

> . . . It is clear therefore (he concluded) that there must be a set of domestic Parliaments separate from one another and from the Imperial Parliament like the *Reichs* in Germany. And there must

be separate sets of Ministers and separate administrations for each. . . .

There then would be three Parliaments and three Administrations, two domestic and one Imperial, and if Scotland demanded a domestic Parliament (as the Scotsmen say she would), then three domestic Parliaments and one Imperial. A nice look out for the Queen. All these practical absurdities seem never to have been faced by those who talk so glibly of independent Parliaments.

But while seeing, with a perhaps exaggerated concern, the difficulties of Home Rule, he was becoming increasingly impressed with the impossibility of the alternative policy. It was on the question of the practicability of the future government of Ireland by coercion that the breach between him and Hartington was beginning to shape itself. Mr. John Morley had spoken at Newcastle on December 22 on the impossibility of repression as a policy, and Hartington wrote to Harcourt opposing the view, and pointing out "that the Irish rebels are probably not more than about three or four millions out of thirty-six millions, and that the Home Rulers are eighty-six out of 670 members of Parliament." In the course of a long letter, written on Christmas Eve, which reveals the workings of his mind in these critical days, Harcourt says:

Harcourt to Hartington.

December 24.— . . . But what I do not think you appreciate as fully as I do is the other side of the picture. I doubt if you realize to its full extent the difficulty if not the impossibility of resistance.

It may be true as you say that the Parnellites are only three or four millions out of thirty-six, and no doubt if they come to a stand-up fight with us they would have no chance. But they will not do this. It is like our fighting with the Mahdi and Osman Digna. We cannot get at them. Our physical (and what is worse our moral) resources are not what they were.

For once in a way there was a sensible article in the *Pall Mall* called "Where is our Cromwell," which I enclose.

(1) As to our *physical* resources. In former Irish rebellions the Irish were *in Ireland*. We could reach their forces, cut off their resources in men and money, and then to subjugate was comparatively easy. Now there is an Irish nation in the United States equally hostile with plenty of money, absolutely beyond our reach, and yet within ten days' sail of our shores. Unless we institute absolute *non-intercourse* with America (a thing which would ruin

our trade and set up the working class in arms) this reserve of resistance will perpetually baffle us. They will keep up a perpetual supply of arms, men, dynamite and assassins.

(2) But the still more insuperable difficulty is the moral weakness of the position. What the *Pall Mall* says on the subject is painfully true. The number of people who sufficiently understand the dangers of Home Rule to feel that it must be repelled at *all costs* is small.

In talking to men like Jesse Collings and Broadhurst I find a sort of general and ignorant toleration of the idea of an Irish Parliament. When the difficulties are stated to them they say, "Oh, these are administrative details (J. Collings's phrase) which you statesmen must deal with." Men of this kind will of course be greatly influenced by the authority of Mr. G. They say they don't mean *separation*, but they are sure that Mr. G. has some plan which is not separation, and they do not care to inquire what it is. They will say, "till this has been tried we will not fight the Irish," and no Government could carry on such a war with a divided opinion in Great Britain. To the ranks of these *honest doubters* would be added all the anarchical spirits who would see in it an opportunity of striking at existing institutions, and the factious partisans who would think only of overthrowing their political adversaries.

The Tory Government struck the fatal blow at any prospect of a really patriotic union on this question when they played for the Parnellite vote last summer. That is a precedent it is impossible to ignore or to wipe out. You and I may be willing to condone it; but that is not the temper in which an exasperated Party will approach the question after a General Election—especially if Mr. G. invites them to the fray. You will not get a Government with the determination to fight out such a terrible battle. If you could find the Government you would not get such a united and persistent public opinion as would sustain it in such a conflict.

One great source of weakness is the fact that the attack would be made in the first instance on the *Irish landlords*, a class with whom the mass of people of this country have little sympathy. They will not *Cromwellize* Ireland for the benefit of the Waterfords and the Tottenhams. . . . The conduct of these men to Spencer disentitles them very much to sympathy. You know Randolph Churchill declared publicly that Waterford advised the resolution to drop the Crimes Act. The silence of the Irish Tory members of the H. of C. and the H. of Lords (of which R. Churchill boasted) on that occasion was their death-warrant, and the general verdict will be "served them right." If there is a general strike against rent you cannot collect it by the bayonet. You will be met everywhere by a passive resistance to law, probably to taxes also.

How is this to be overcome?

When Coercion is proposed there will be a large *English* party

adverse to it. I am not sure that I myself think it possible in the present situation after what took place in July. In the background there will be the perpetual cry, "Rather let the Irish go as Mr. Gladstone proposed. Why did you not try his plan? Anything is better than a policy hateful to our traditions and our sentiments —a policy of blood in Ireland, possibly of war with America." I believe no Government could find or maintain a firm footing in such a position. It is very different from the American Secession. Then an organized rebellious force fired on the national flag at Fort Sumter, which inflamed the national pride, and the North was pretty well united. The refusal to pay rent to the Irish landlords will evoke no similar feeling here. I fear resistance is more likely to resemble our own failure in the War of Independence of 1776 than the success of the North in the American Civil War.

Pray think out this aspect of the question as well as the other with your accustomed cool and calm judgment.

On the same day Chamberlain was writing to Harcourt an illuminating letter which showed how his thoughts were taking shape, and his suspicion that Harcourt was moving in the direction of Hawarden. He had learned what the Parnellite terms were, and for his part was not prepared to accept a Home Rule scheme.

In his reply, written on Christmas Day, Harcourt said he was fast coming to the paradoxical and hopeless conclusion that nothing but the grant of Home Rule would ever convince the English people that they ought to have fought to the death rather than concede it. From the moment that the Tories sold the pass to Parnell for office in June it had been a lost cause. But he was chiefly concerned that the Party should hang together:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

. . . I hope in spite of all you say that we may still stick together. Pray for a Christian and Christmas spirit of "Peace on earth and goodwill towards *all men*—especially *Whig men*, especially when in substantials we are agreed. I don't think that H. (Hartington) is half as unfriendly to you as you are to him. If you will go one-quarter of the way I think he will do the other three-quarters. The public situation is far too grave, and the prospects of the future far too black to allow of personal dislikes.

I learn from H. that Mr. G. has never written to him since his (H.'s) letter to his constituents disavowing Home Rule. It looks as if he meant to send us all to Coventry. . . .

The reticence of Gladstone was perplexing most of his colleagues. Two days after Christmas Chamberlain wrote again declaring Mr. Gladstone's intention, since he had learned that the Government would not attempt to settle the Irish question, himself to "go forward or fall." In going forward without consulting his colleagues Gladstone had absolved them from any obligations to him. He proposed that he, Hartington, Dilke and Harcourt should meet. If they agreed they might then put pressure on Gladstone to deliver his plan. If he insisted on going on without them they might call a party meeting and submit their differences. He thought the majority of the party would be against Gladstone. In any case they would have liberated their minds. If they remained quiet much longer Gladstone would have the game in his hands, and the unity of the party would be destroyed.

The meeting was arranged for New Year's Day at Devonshire House, and Harcourt wrote to Chamberlain that he was still unable to see how the fight could be carried on if the scheme was rejected out of hand:

> . . . Can we conduct the conflict with Mr. G. and his plan *outstanding* against us and unrevealed, with people saying when we come to extremities, "Why did you not try G.'s plan." That for me is the great danger. We must do all we can to get this card played on the table and not to have it always behind us. I foresee that it may be necessary to let him try his hand so that no one can say all methods had not been exhausted. Pray turn the matter over from this point of view. . . .

On the morning of New Year's Day a little light reached Harcourt from the recluse of Hawarden. He said that he felt the Irish question "sometimes makes me feel as if I were ground into the dust," but that his intentions were limited to making the Government understand his anxiety that they should handle the question with, if possible, the support of the Liberals.

That afternoon Chamberlain called on Harcourt, and the two went together to meet Hartington and Dilke at Devonshire House. Hartington had just returned from a visit at Althorp to Spencer, who had told him that the action of the

Tories had made coercion impossible, and that he saw nothing for it but some kind of Home Rule. That was the conclusion of the majority of the Devonshire House meeting, though Chamberlain would not agree to the retention of the whole of the Irish members in the English Parliament. He would support a scheme for making Ireland "a protected State." Recording Chamberlain's scheme the Journal says:

January 1.— . . . His idea is this—give Ireland a constitution, an upper and a lower House of Assembly; reserve to England the power and the duty of protecting her and preventing her becoming the *point d'appui* of a foreign nation in time of war; retain a military garrison in some fortified town in Ireland, and have a governor or lord-lieutenant, who should be chiefly military, but possess the power of dissolving the chambers; relieve Ireland of all contribution to Imperial taxation except a yearly payment in the form of a terminable annuity towards her share of the National Debt as it now stands; make an agreement that in any customs or protective tariff England should receive the treatment of the most favoured nation, but no more; all representation of Ireland in the Imperial Parliament to cease. He thinks Healy and a number of the leading Nationalists would be only too glad, when they had real work, to have the assistance of the conservative feeling which would spring up under this state of things. . . . [H.]

III

Meanwhile the attempt to "draw" Gladstone continued to meet with ill success. He still showed no anxiety to meet or communicate further with his colleagues, and to an offer from Harcourt to send him some "reflections on the causes of the present discontents" he said:

January 3.— . . . I am a little apprehensive of any exposition of the "causes of the present discontents," for (1) you are not in possession of all the materials. I have had divers and serious discontents myself: but have tried to keep them to myself. (2) It seems to me that all our best efforts are or should be pre-engaged upon the future. The question of Irish Government as it stands before us, and whichever way we take, is I think the biggest of our time: and my own share of the responsibility is, in my own view, the largest I have ever had. . . .

While Gladstone was writing this polite refusal, Harcourt was engaged on the task he had proposed. He had finished a memorandum of sixty-three quarto pages dictated to his

son when Gladstone's letter reached him. He took it to Hartington instead, and when three days later Gladstone changed his mind and asked to see it, he replied that he did not think it was worth sending to him. The amenities were clearly a little strained. In the meantime at Harcourt's request Hartington had written to Gladstone asking him to meet the ex-Cabinet to explain his scheme ; but he was still wary. He " civilly declined," said Harcourt to Chamberlain ; but said he would be in London on the 11th, the day before the meeting of the new Parliament, when he " will receive anyone at 4 p.m. who wishes to *see him*." " I think if we go," said Harcourt, " we should attend as a *posse comitatus* and not *singly*." Chamberlain agreed. It was monstrous, he said, that Gladstone should put every obstacle in the way of counsel. His present inclination was to take Mr. G.'s refusal to come up as a snub, and not to make any further advances to him. Perhaps the irritation at Gladstone's aloofness had something to do with the return of a cold fit on Home Rule on the part of Chamberlain, for his New Year's Day mood had passed, and he announced that his inclination was increasingly against any concession to the Irish demand. The plan of meeting Gladstone in a body was defeated, for the wily leader invited his colleagues for different hours. " It is evident that he proposes to ' nobble ' us in detail," wrote Chamberlain to Harcourt. The interviews did not sensibly enlighten the situation, for Gladstone was obscure, with intentions, but no " plan " for discussion, and still apparently half hoping that the Government would take up the subject themselves. That night Chamberlain dined with Harcourt, and was all agog about a new scheme of Home Rule propounded by Robert Giffen in the *Statist*. In the midst of their after-dinner talk Spencer was announced, and Chamberlain got up to go. Harcourt urged him to stay, but Chamberlain replied, " No, I am off ; I don't want to see the Red Earl ; I attribute all our difficulties in Ireland to his opposition to my National Council scheme last summer." He fled from the room, and was with difficulty prevailed on to come back. The incident

was typical of the tangle of confusion and recrimination in which the party was involved.

Next day the new Parliament assembled for members to take the oath. At noon Harcourt went to Gladstone's house to meet Granville, Spencer and Chamberlain, and there a heated controversy took place on the immediate course to pursue. Harcourt sought to extract from Gladstone a statement of what his action would be if Parnell moved an amendment to the Address in favour of an Irish Parliament, and when Gladstone seemed to suggest that in that case he would walk out without voting, Harcourt said, "Then I think it right to tell you, Mr. Gladstone, that you will not be followed in that course by a dozen men on your own side, for half of the party will vote for the amendment and the other half against, and the split will have become a *fait accompli*." But the haze with which Gladstone enveloped himself at this time only meant that he was waiting to see how the confusions on the Government side would resolve themselves. If the Carnarvon policy won he would leave the Government in undisturbed possession; but the threat of coercion would be accepted as a challenge to him to take the field with the alternative policy which now absorbed his whole thoughts. The completeness with which he had broken with the long tradition of Ulster ascendancy was illustrated by an incident two nights later (recorded in the Journal) when he, with Granville, Hartington, Ripon, Morley and others, was dining at Harcourt's house:

January 14.— . . . W. V. H. mentioned the "loyal" Irish. The word seemed to stir Gladstone's wrath extremely, and he said sarcastically, "Was there ever such a noble race as that! What a beautiful word 'loyalist.' How much they have done for their country. You say that the Nationalists care for nothing but money, but have not the loyalists the same tastes?" W. V. H. replied, "Certainly, the only difference is that where you can buy a Nationalist for £5 you must pay £6 for a loyalist." Turning to Lady Airlie, W. V. H. said, "I once asked your father (Lord Stanley of Alderley) what was the smallest sum he had ever paid for a vote in the House of Commons, and he replied that he had once bought an Irish member for £5 on the morning of the Derby." Gladstone said, "You think Ireland is a little hell on earth." W. V. H. said, "Yes, I think the

only mistake Cromwell ever made was when he offered them the alternative of Connaught. . . ." [H.]

Two days later (January 16) came the first clear indication that the Government were coming down on the side of coercion. The resignation of Carnarvon was announced, and though the Queen's Speech (January 21) contained no mention of coercion it was assumed that that policy would be adopted. W. H. Smith, the new Chief Secretary, had been sent over to Ireland to report on the situation, but without waiting for his return the Cabinet decided on repressive measures, and the announcement was made on January 26. With that declaration battle was joined. In a fragment written by Gladstone in the autumn of 1897, and quoted in Lord Morley's *Life of Gladstone*, he says:

> The determining event of these transactions was the declaration of the Government that they would propose coercion for Ireland. . . . Immediately on making up my mind about the ejection of the Government I went to call on Sir William Harcourt, and informed him as to my intentions and the grounds of them. He said, "What! Are you prepared to go forward without either Hartington or Chamberlain?" I answered, "Yes." I believe it was in my mind to say, if I did not actually say it, that I was prepared to go forward without anybody.

That same evening the Government were out. They had announced their intention in the afternoon to bring in a Coercion Bill two days later, and at night they were defeated on Jesse Collings's amendment to the Address, popularly known as the "three acres and a cow" amendment. It had been drafted by Chamberlain and Harcourt at Harcourt's house, and expressed regret that the Queen's Speech contained no promise of "facilities to the agricultural labourers and others in the rural districts to obtain allotments and small holdings." The debate, unimportant in itself, disclosed the new formation in politics brought about by the announcement earlier in the day. Hartington and Goschen supported the Government; the Irish Nationalists voted for the amendment. It was carried by a majority of seventy-nine which practically represented the strength of the Irish vote. Salisbury forthwith resigned, and Gladstone was left face to face with the supreme task of his life.

CHAPTER XXVI

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

The new Gladstone Ministry—Harcourt's reservations—Chancellor of the Exchequer—Jesse Collings's salary—Departmental struggle over the Estimates—The Cottage Budget.

THE Salisbury Government had fallen on Tuesday, January 26. It was not until Friday, at a quarter after midnight, that Ponsonby called on Gladstone with a verbal commission from the Queen which he accepted. On the following Monday he went to Osborne, where he found Her Majesty quite amiable, showing, as he said afterwards, "none of the 'armed neutrality' which as far as I know has been the best definition of her attitude in the more recent years towards a Liberal minister." The result of the election, however confused in some respects, had given a sanction to an experiment in the policy of conciliation that was as undeniable as it was unprecedented, and as Salisbury had refused to make that experiment there was no constitutional alternative to a Gladstone Ministry.

No more formidable task ever confronted a Prime Minister than that to which Gladstone now addressed himself. The healing of the ancient quarrel between England and Ireland had become the obsession of his life, and the overwhelming verdict of the Irish elections represented to him an authority that obliterated the ordinary calculations of party strategy. He was anxious to carry his colleagues with him; but if he could not do that he would go forward with such help as was available. His procedure was skilfully designed to make the inevitable rupture as slight as the pursuit of his

unalterable purpose permitted. He drew up a memorandum which committed those who accepted office in the new Cabinet only to the task of examining the practicability of setting up a legislative body in Dublin to deal with Irish as distinguished from imperial affairs. It was an invitation which spread his net wide for those who, though hostile to Home Rule, were nevertheless sufficiently open-minded on the subject to give it consideration. He addressed himself first to Hartington, who at once declined his invitation, and was followed in this course by Goschen, James and the Whig element of the Liberal Party, which thenceforward ceased to represent the aristocratic influence that had dominated its counsels in the past.

For this fracture in his ranks Gladstone was prepared. An unkinder blow came with the decision of John Bright to stand aloof. The stampede from his side was becoming formidable, and it was emphasized by the announcement that Mr. Morley, whose speeches in the country had made him the most conspicuous and unqualified advocate of the cause of Home Rule among the Liberal leaders, had been offered and had accepted the post of Irish Secretary. There remained the Radicals and the centre group. The attitude of Chamberlain and Harcourt, important in any circumstances, had become of capital consequence in view of the Whig landslide from Gladstone. The day following the visit of Ponsonby to him, Gladstone, accompanied by his wife, called on Harcourt at Grafton Street. Harcourt took up the position to which events had now finally driven him. He told Gladstone that he would join him, not because he believed in the possibility of the scheme succeeding, but because he believed that in order to make the future government of Ireland possible the scheme must be discussed and, if possible, tried, and that the chief reason why he was willing to join was that unless he did so he thought there might be a danger of Gladstone not being able to form a Government at all. After Gladstone had left, Harcourt wrote the following letter to him, receiving the reply the same evening:

Harcourt to Gladstone.

7, GRAFTON STREET, *January* 31.—I was very sorry this afternoon not to be able honestly to take a more sanguine view of the political situation than that which I expressed to you.

I think you have understood from the first my attitude with reference to the Irish question. I have not either from any reflection of my own or from the slight indications I have received of your views on the subject been able to arrive at the conclusion that there is any probability of devising a scheme of "Home Rule"—by which I mean a plan involving a *legislative body sitting in Ireland*—which could fulfil the conditions laid down by you in the paper which you showed to Mr. Chamberlain in respect to the securities for the interests which you justly say must be protected and maintained.

I have seen nothing to alter my opinion on that subject up to the present moment. If therefore your Government was about to be formed on the basis of the adoption of a separate *legislative body in Ireland* I could not conscientiously join it. But I understand from you that this is a question to be examined by the Cabinet with perfect freedom to every member of it to arrive at his own conclusions upon it, and to decline to adopt such a proposal if upon consideration he should not be satisfied of its safety or policy.

Perhaps it may be said that no one should join your Government who had not at least the hope or expectation that the examination would result in a conclusion in favour of the demand for an Irish legislature upon practicable conditions—that is certainly not my position. But I have from the first felt that your great influence and authority make your opinions and views on this subject so potent an element in dealing with the Irish problem that before having recourse to any other alternative every effort should be made to bring them forward for a fair trial. If they should succeed every one will admit it will be an immense blessing. If they fail at least it will be felt that the supreme effort at conciliation will have been made. If therefore you think after this frank expression of my mind my co-operation can be of any service in enabling you to examine the question I feel bound not to stand aside but to lend all the aid in my power for that object.

But as the question of the possibility of the concession with safety of a "legislative body" under any conditions is one to be *examined* and which is not *concluded* at present I understand that nothing is to be done which should fetter the freedom of the Cabinet to accept or reject such a solution. That being so I understood you to assent to my desire that no communications should be made to Mr. Parnell which in any way involved the *idea of an Irish Legislature* until the Cabinet had had a full opportunity of considering the question. In short that Mr. Parnell should receive no information as to your views on this point other than those publicly made by you already until the basis of action had been settled by the Cabinet. For of

course if Mr. Parnell were made acquainted with your views on this matter there could no longer be any freedom of judgment left to the Cabinet.

Those members of the Government who go to their constituents must be in a position to state publicly that no conclusion has been arrived at on this subject, and that they are entirely free to form their own judgment upon it. They would require to stand on the words of your Manifesto which carefully excludes all reference to a "legislative body." To many members of the Government this may and probably would be an essential condition of their return.

From this point of view I think it is deserving of consideration how the matter will be affected by appointing Mr. John Morley to the post of Irish Secretary. That his position and abilities entitle him to a place in the Cabinet I entirely agree. Nor would the fact of his declaration on the Irish question be any objection in another situation when he was only one individual in the Cabinet. But will not his appointment to the Irish post be taken by the public to be a declaration that the opinions he has promulgated on the subject of an Irish Parliament are the settled views of yourself and of the Government; that in point of fact this question of an Irish Parliament is not a subject for further examination, but one already concluded. For it will be obviously impossible for Mr. Morley to deal with Mr. Parnell on any other footing than that of the opinions he has himself proclaimed. In fact Mr. Morley's appointment will be construed as a declaration in favour of an Irish Parliament without any examination at all unless indeed it is met by a counter declaration which it would be very inconvenient to make at the present moment. I hope you may be disposed to consider this, which is a very critical matter, before it is finally determined.

Gladstone to Harcourt.

21, Carlton House Terrace, *January* 31.—With regard to the assurance which you ask I hoped I had satisfied you by my statement that I should do *nothing* to compromise in any way the freedom of the Cabinet as to action on the basis I propose without its assent. I have not in any way considered the question of when and how as to communication with the Irish Party, but I shall do nothing to abridge what I have just stated.

It is for me in forming a Government to propose the terms on which I ask others to join with me: unquestionably they commit no one to the advocacy of a separate Parliament.

Nor can the appointment of John Morley have any such effect.

The terms of announcement of policy to the world cannot now be decided on: but as far as I understand your view and can now consider it, I agree very much with you.

You remember our conversation on Monday about the difficulty of joining the Cabinet in the House of Commons. I told you to-day

how much I should rely upon you for assistance *there*. My request to you is to take high office in the House of Commons. I understood you to accede to it. If I was wrong, I much regret it.

This exchange of letters clinched the arrangement, and two days later Harcourt accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. According to his manner when once committed, Harcourt flung his whole energies into the task of making the experiment a success. He might be wrong, but he was never half-hearted when he had taken the plunge "As Benedick observes," he wrote to E. W. Hamilton, Gladstone's private secretary (February 3), "when I swore to die a bachelor I never thought to be a married man. But like a woman who is married I forget all I ever said when I was single . . . I shall go to the Treasury and leave the reputation of being the greatest *skinflint* that ever entered the gates." In the feverish discussions of the next few days as to the personnel of the Ministry, Harcourt was a constant and forcible influence, and Gladstone handsomely acknowledged his help when, writing to him from Mentmore on February 6, he said, "I must not let the week absolutely close without emphatically thanking you for the indefatigable and effective help which you have rendered to me during its course in the difficult task now mainly accomplished."

In no direction was the help more valuable than in the difficult task of placating Chamberlain. His attitude was the most complex of all the cases with which Gladstone had to deal. For years he had been the unceasing advocate of conciliation, and his chief grievance against Spencer, who had joined the new Government, was that he was the real culprit who had queered the pitch for his National Council scheme of the previous summer. He had been angry at the aloofness of Gladstone after the election, the result of which he knew had been largely due to the popularity of what he called "the cow," which was his own special contribution. But he was still more angry with Hartington, and the fact that Hartington was a root-and-branch opponent of Home Rule might have been assumed to strengthen his

sympathy with Gladstone's intentions. In some of his moods, indeed, this was so. On January 25 he had told Harcourt that he was "leaning much more to Home Rule now that he saw a chance of getting rid of Hartington," and when Harcourt protested he replied, "I know you will weep at Hartington's departure." "Yes," said Harcourt, "I have two eyes and shall weep with one when Hartington goes, and the other when you go." But Hartington's refusal did not make Chamberlain less shy of embarking on the new adventure. His indisposition was not diminished by the fact that he was first offered the Admiralty, a position which, with the views he then held, was obviously inappropriate. He saw the difficulty of a point-blank refusal to join the Ministry. Such a course might have left him with the odium of having made Gladstone's task impossible and the election of no effect. He was not prepared for so extreme a breach with the Leader and the Party, and in the end accepted the Local Government Board, on the same understanding as that with Harcourt, that he had unlimited liberty of judgment and rejection in regard to any proposal put forward in regard to Home Rule. Unlike Harcourt, however, who, once embarked, threw himself heartily into the spirit of the adventure, Chamberlain had no heart in the business.

His disinclination was increased by a trifling circumstance which assumed a rather absurd gravity in his mind, due in part to the fine quality of loyalty to his friends which always distinguished him. Jesse Collings, his most faithful follower, had been offered the Under-Secretaryship of the Local Government Board, but in making the offer Gladstone had, as also in the case of the Under-Secretary of the Board of Trade, reduced the salary by £300. It was a maladroit proceeding, and outraged Chamberlain, who wrote to Harcourt (February 5) a furious letter, in which he said Collings had won Gladstone more votes than all his peers put together, and this was his reward. Why should not a few thousands be taken from Granville or Kimberley or Childers? He had sent Gladstone word that as he evidently did not attach

importance to the presence either of Collings or himself in his Government he wished to reconsider his position. Harcourt assumed his best bedside manner in replying to this tornado :

Harcourt to Chamberlain

7, GRAFTON STREET, *February* 7.— . . . I quite sympathize with your feeling about Collings, and indeed expressed myself to that effect when the suggestion was first made some days ago. As an abstract proposition the proposal to make the salaries of the second man have some relation to that of his chief is not unsound, but I pointed out then that it was singularly unfortunate at this moment that the two individuals upon whom this reform would fall were Collings and Broadhurst (who was then destined to the Board of Trade), the very men whom one would have least desired to make the objects of exceptional reduction. . . . I need not say how much I regret that you and Mr. G. should have been personally so much at arms length for the last week. Nothing can be so unfortunate for both parties and for the Government. The cordial co-operation of you two is absolutely essential to its existence. You know how I deplored that you and Hartington did not meet more and exchange ideas. Recently I think when you did so a great many difficulties were removed, and so it would be in this case, and indeed it must be if things are to go on. . . .

I am obliged to go to Derby to-morrow (Monday), and if unopposed shall return Tuesday or Wednesday. I am sorry to be absent as I might have been of use in patching up the Collings row, but don't let a trifle of this kind ruin the Republic. . . .

Pray come back in a humour disposed to make the machine work. You must remember in regard to Collings's case that Mr. G. has no doubt insisted on the reduction in the case of Sir E. Grey, who is I believe to go to the Board of Trade, and it would put Collings in a false position if he were to refuse what Grey accepts.

The same day Harcourt wrote to Gladstone telling him that Chamberlain was very sore about the reduction, and asking him to request Chamberlain to come and see him personally. "I think that the real grievance," he continued, "is that he considers you have withheld your confidence and not communicated with him as much as he deserved. A *friendly talk* would I think remove many difficulties which may become very serious . . . I have found C. very amenable when so handled." To Lord Rosebery he wrote saying, "It would be a calamitous thing if

the Chamberlain connection were to fly off upon a miserable pecuniary squabble," and that Gladstone's attitude "provokes him (Chamberlain) to see slights where they are not intended and to make difficulties which might otherwise be got over." Gladstone promptly acted on Harcourt's advice. Writing next day to him, he said:

Gladstone to Harcourt.

MENTMORE, *February* 8.—No fear. I have not the least intention of having a row about the £300. I am awaiting a note from Jesse. If he holds out I shall (without compromising your rights) at once give way to Chamberlain's will; not so his reasons which are null.

I have also made up my mind to write to him to-day or to-morrow, and invite a communication towards the end of the week. But people give me credit I think for working six times faster than I can work. There is an old and good saying, "Put one foot upon another." Still there must always be one foot after another. My hands are full, and my pace I suppose is slow.

There is one Irish subject which I much wish to discuss with you when I come back and after your meditated excursion; say about Thursday or Friday.

I understand your mind is finally made up about your official house, except a room, in the negative. If so it will be much to the advantage of my staff that we should all resume our positions. But if you decide or lean otherwise, we can all do quite well in the First Lord's house.[1]

The storm blew over, but the memory remained as one of those small irritations that have their place in the sum of great events. Chamberlain wrote to Harcourt (February 9) that Gladstone had surrendered subject to his (Harcourt's) approval, and calling on him not to dock poor Collings of his scanty pittance.

II

Harcourt, who had been returned unopposed for Derby, addressed himself at once to the task of proving that he

[1] Harcourt, possibly with a prescience of the early defeat of the Government, had determined not to occupy the official residence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, No. 11, Downing Street. He continued to reside at his own house in Grafton Street, leaving No. 11 to be occupied by Mr. Gladstone's secretarial staff, as in 1880–85, with the exception of one sitting-room, which Harcourt reserved for himself.

was, in his own phrase, the greatest "skinflint" who had ever been at the Treasury. It was a task that appealed to him in many ways. He had imbibed from Cornewall Lewis a passion for public economy, his experience of office had convinced him of the enormity of departmental waste; above all, he had long groaned under the ever-increasing exactions of the war services, and the opportunity of coming to grips with those devouring monsters had a special attraction for the most pugnacious pacifist that ever drew his sword in the cause of brotherly love. He set out to slay the dragons of public profligacy with the same fury with which for the past four or five years he had assailed the dragons of public disorder, and for the time being his old and eminently peaceful friend Ripon, who had the misfortune to be at the Admiralty, and Campbell-Bannerman, who had gone to the War Office, seemed little better than his old enemies the anarchists, masquerading in an artful disguise of honest, middle-aged gentlemen. The wholesome tradition of Treasury control over the spending departments, which has vanished in these spendthrift days when the Chancellor of the Exchequer has little more authority over the Estimates than he has over the motions of the tides, still survived, and Harcourt exercised it with that merciless and masterful insistence that made him, as one of his present victims said, a thorn in the flesh to his friends as well as a terror to his foes.

He began operations without delay by sending a shot across Ripon's bows as a warning. He told him (February 10) that if "the Cabinet should determine sensibly to increase the naval and military expenditure above the normal rate of the last few years, I cannot be the Minister to ask for the ways and means for such a purpose. I have made up my mind that there is nothing in the state of affairs which calls for increased expenditure on armaments, and the condition of the country will not justify exceptional taxation." Ripon did not like the warning shot. "It is a mistake to begin firing your big guns at the commencement of an action," he wrote (February 10); "I shall reserve mine for closer quarters." With this exchange, the engagement

began. From Campbell-Bannerman at the War Office came the intolerable tidings that the Estimates bequeathed to him by his predecessor in the office necessitated an addition of two and a half millions to the Army expenditure. There were 10,000 more troops for India, the maintenance of 18,000 men in Egypt, necessitating depots in this country for the provision of the necessary drafts, and so on. Harcourt, boiling with indignation, turned for support to his Chief, who had been a famous "skinflint" in his day. Gladstone sent him (February 12) a letter designed to override the culprits at the War Office and the Admiralty. Unfortunately, while it supported Harcourt's immediate point it did so by threatening him with other demands upon his purse. Ireland was paramount, and, said Gladstone, the settlement of the land question would involve such heavy expenditure that the cost of the fighting services must be reduced within practicable limits. Harcourt sent the letter off to Ripon and Campbell-Bannerman with an accompanying note in which he said:

February 12.— . . . The naval and military Estimates of 1884–5 and 1885–6 have reached the sum of *£30,000,000*, a high-level mark never attained before even in the time of Lord Palmerston's panics.

This has been due partly to the Egyptian muddle, partly to the *Pall Mall* scare got up by the Services.

In my opinion the expenditure must be reduced—in no event can it be allowed to be exceeded.

I do not believe in *Pall Mall* scares, and I am hostile to a prolonged occupation of Egypt. I can therefore be no party to an increase of war expenditure founded on either of these elements.

To propose in a time of peace an increase in the number of the army—or a larger expenditure than the great augmentation we have already made in the navy—is a thing which I cannot accept. It would be in my opinion unjustifiable in a time when the resources of the country were flourishing. In the present condition of its finances it would be not only *unjustifiable* but I am glad to think also *impossible*.

The various sources of revenue are failing. All classes of the country are distressed. In such a situation there is only one resource for sound finance—*magnum est vectigal—parsimonia*. It is the only finance for which I can make myself personally responsible.

As he could obtain no definite assurances of reduction he appealed again to Cæsar. Writing to Gladstone (February 12), he said the Admiralty asked for a million and a half additional; the War Office for two and a half millions. There was no way of meeting their demands except by an additional 2*d*. on the income tax. "That *I* cannot propose." In six years "your Government" had already raised the war and naval Estimates from 25 to 30 millions. Now it was proposed to raise them to 34 millions. "If this is done I think it should be done by a Tory administration." And next day he returned to the charge with a letter concluding, "It is not therefore at all with me a question of details or to how much or how little they are to be increased, but my position is absolute that they shall not be increased at all. That is the only sound and intelligible ground to take—*and I at least must stand or fall by it.*"

In the light of the colossal public burdens of to-day, when the income tax levies shillings where it then levied pence, and the national debt is reckoned by the thousand instead of the hundred millions, the alarm of Harcourt at the financial outlook will seem exaggerated. But we cannot apply the standards of a shipwrecked society to the economy of a seaworthy vessel. From the point of view of the sober and rigorous traditions of that enviable time, the financial outlook furnished abundant reason for Harcourt's anxiety. The Treasury were faced by a deficit on the closing year of nearly £3,400,000 instead of an estimated deficit of £2,800,000, and with a total deficit in the years 1884–5 and 1885–6 of £4,500,000. In a rough draft of his Budget which he sent to Gladstone, Harcourt said he proposed to meet this two years' deficit by suspending the debt payments to the extent of £5,200,000. It followed that if there were to be increases on the army and navy they must come out of income tax. He presented Gladstone with figures showing with what alarming progression the cost of military establishments had advanced since his first Premiership. Gladstone agreed that there must be no new taxation, and that it was impossible both to arrest

the Sinking Fund and to leave the deficit unprovided for. At his suggestion Childers, the ex-Chancellor, was called in to go over the Estimates with Harcourt and the offending Ministers. But the utmost that could be got out of them was the whittling-down of the increase of their Estimates over the previous year from four millions to two.

Harcourt was not satisfied, and informed Gladstone (February 19) that if these Estimates were accepted he must ask to be allowed to resign his office. Gladstone gently ignored the threat, and urged Harcourt to meet the other three again. Childers complained to Gladstone (February 21) that Harcourt was lacking in patience. "Estimates are not to be reduced by strong language, but by patient and searching inquiries." But Harcourt's point was that if he was inveigled into the discussion of details he was beaten by the departments beforehand. "No real economy will be achieved," he wrote to Gladstone (February 22), "until a resolution is taken and adhered to, of fixing a maximum which is not to be exceeded. If you had felt at liberty to express to the heads of departments your own opinion and wish for economy, which I have so often asked for, the issue might have been different. For me the situation is impossible. I feel to stand alone and I must fall alone." However, he did not fall. The renewed conferences reduced the Estimates of the war services another million, and E. W. Hamilton, the Prime Minister's secretary, wrote to Harcourt:

E. W. Hamilton to Harcourt.

10, Downing Street, *February* 25.— . . . This is an enormous reduction to have effected; the largest, I believe, on record. Mr. Gladstone about twenty-three years ago knocked off two millions —in the teeth of Lord Palmerston's and Sir G. C. Lewis's opposition —a feat on which he always much prided himself; and he had as a lever the threat of a Select Committee and a vote of censure on the extravagance of the Government. You have now surpassed this feat with a Parliament sitting which thinks a deal more about spending than economizing. . . . I venture to hope in the interests of the Government and the Treasury that you may rest content with the great work of economy which you have already effected, sooner than that more serious results should follow.

The controversy between the great departments and the Treasury ends on a pleasanter note. Harcourt wrote to Lord Ripon a minute endorsed for handing on to Campbell-Bannerman, to say how the French Government were balancing their budget by curtailing their naval and military commitments, and added, "As Carlyle says, 'Great art thou, oh bankruptcy.' What a good thing for the world it would be if all nations were altogether insolvent! How much less mischief they would do!" On the back of this note Campbell-Bannerman minutes, "You are very cruel after the ruthless sacrifices you have imposed on us. . . . No doubt great would be the uses of bankruptcy; it might even make a Treasury and a Chancellor of the Exchequer unnecessary? But even beggars will fight, so that a War Minister (without salary) would still survive."

The Budget was introduced by Harcourt on April 15. It had no outstanding features, and was called the "Cottage" Budget owing to the abandonment of the licence for cottage brewing. Its real achievement was the avoidance of new taxation, due to Harcourt's uncompromising resistance to the demands of the war services.

CHAPTER XXVII

DEFEAT OF HOME RULE

The Tory *volte-face*—Differences in the Cabinet on the draft of the Bill—Chamberlain's resignation—Harcourt's speech in the House on the Bill—Attempt to dissuade Chamberlain from voting on the second reading—Defeat of the Government—General Election.

WHILE Harcourt was fighting his battle with the war departments, the attention of Parliament and the country was occupied with the preparations for the coming struggle on which the fate of the Government hung. The prospects were not promising. The stampede of the Conservative leaders from their Parnellite allies at the election had consolidated their party more firmly than before. They had an unpleasant incident to live down, and the recollection of their aberration from the path of virtue lent new fervour to their devotion to the cause of the Union. They had every reason to feel confident. The defection of Hartington and the Whigs, and the aloofness of Bright from the Government at the mere hint of Home Rule tendencies, had gravely weakened the parliamentary following of Gladstone. And these losses, it was assumed, only foreshadowed more serious defections. Harcourt and Chamberlain were, next to Gladstone himself, easily the most powerful members of the Government, and both had accepted office with a very clear intimation that they reserved to themselves entire freedom of action on the capital question. One or both of them might be expected to break away, and in either case it was tolerably certain that the Government could not survive.

Meanwhile feeling was rising in the country to fever heat.

Randolph Churchill, who had played so leading a part in angling for the Irish vote, had swung round with the tide of events, and had become the most frenzied assailant of the policy from which he had now scuttled. Only a few months before he had had to cancel a meeting at Liverpool owing to the opposition of the Orangemen to his notorious flirtations with the Parnellites ; now he went as the hot gospeller of Orange ascendancy to the holy city of that cult, and, as so often happened at critical moments in Belfast, serious rioting followed. The Orangemen were encouraged to defy Home Rule if it should become the law of the land, and the lambkins of Unionism had their simple gospel condensed for them into the jingle " Ulster will fight and Ulster will be right." The disorders in Belfast were so serious that they led to grave conflicts with the military and the police, the latter of whom were dubbed " Morley's murderers." Churchill did not confine his activities to inflaming the Orange mob and alarming the comfortable Englishman by the cry of " The Empire in danger." He conceived, being a Churchill, the idea of a new political party. At Manchester on March 3 he invited Liberals to join the Conservatives in forming a political organization to which he gave the name of Unionist. It was to be a party which " shall be essentially English in all those ideas of justice, of moderation, of freedom from prejudice, of resolution, which are the peculiarities of the English race." It was a noble programme, and Churchill as the preacher of justice and moderation gave the proposal an appropriate touch of humour.

While all this was going on in the country the Bill that was awaited with such eager interest and even alarm was on the anvil. It engaged the whole mind of Gladstone, who, however, at this stage worked largely alone, leaving the negotiations with Parnell to the Irish Secretary. It was not until March 7 that he sent to Harcourt a paper indicating the lines of his plan. Harcourt replied that the scheme, in the words of Pitt's comment on Butler's *Analogy*, " raised more doubts in my mind than it solved." He insisted that the scheme, *talis qualis*, should be brought before the Cabinet

without any delay, pronounced against the *dual composition* of the Irish Parliament, held that if there was to be a counter-check it should take the form of a Second Chamber, declared that the exclusion of the Irish members from the English Parliament was a *sine qua non*, and raised other points which, "if the Cabinet sat every day for three months, we should have little time enough to discuss and consider." So far so good. He was critical, but not hostile. Gladstone gently pleaded that "it is not possible to work a Cabinet on the basis of universal discussion without purpose, at any rate at seventy-seven," but he acted promptly on the suggestion that the scheme should come before the Cabinet. A week later (March 13) the plan, which consisted of two parts, a scheme for creating a legislative body and a scheme of land purchase, was put before the Cabinet. The land scheme was pressed by Spencer and Mr. John Morley, but it was not popular, and gravely prejudiced the prospects of the major proposal. Chamberlain and Sir G. O. Trevelyan indicated their wish to resign at once; but were prevailed on to post-pone that step. Harcourt was not without hope at this stage that it might be postponed altogether, for the Journal records:

March 15.—Chamberlain had a long talk with W. V. H. in the latter's room at the House of Commons. C. is determined to go, and is most anxious to take W. V. H. with him if possible. W. V. H. said, "Will you go and see Spencer and talk it over with him?" Chamberlain replied, "No, certainly not. I have the greatest contempt for Spencer, who has been the origin of all the mischief. He thinks that because he could not govern Ireland no one else can." Before leaving Chamberlain said, "I must see Trevelyan before he sends in his resignation and tell him to leave some loop-hole of escape, or he may find himself out in the cold alone," which does not look as if Chamberlain were so determined. [H.]

It is not easy to follow the motives of Chamberlain through all the tangle of discussion from the summer of 1885 onwards, and the conclusion one is driven to is that so disruptive a temper was destined to explode no matter what terms were proposed. He had joined the Government, without enthu-siasm it is true, but with the understanding that he would

" examine " (in the terms of Gladstone's memorandum) the practicability of a scheme of Home Rule. But on the first production of the scheme he expressed his wish to resign without a show of examination.

Before the Cabinet reassembled Harcourt, who, though himself highly combustible, had a great gift for managing the fire engine when political conflagrations broke out, made praiseworthy efforts to avert the catastrophe. He still shared many of the hesitations of Chamberlain, but with this difference that he was satisfied that recent events—the Carnarvon episode, the Tory bid for the Irish vote, the result of the election in Ireland, and Gladstone's decisive challenge —had made it necessary that Home Rule should be thoroughly explored, and even tried, before the alternative of force could again be considered. This was a clear attitude. Chamberlain, on the other hand, was as hostile to Coercion as ever, but now equally hostile to Home Rule. In a memorandum of conversations with him which Harcourt sent to Gladstone on the morning of March 20, he said that Chamberlain objected to both branches of the scheme independently and in combination—to the land scheme because there was no sufficient security for the money, to the legislative scheme because there was no guarantee for the integrity of the Empire and the supremacy of Parliament. He would not look at a settlement on Dominion lines, but seemed prepared to discuss a federal system after the pattern of the United States. Harcourt in forwarding the memorandum urged Gladstone to see Chamberlain himself.

This course Gladstone does not seem to have followed. When later in the day (March 20) the Cabinet met the situation was extremely feverish. Chamberlain, according to his own subsequent statement, intended to be conciliatory. But Gladstone, still smarting under what he regarded as the indefensible haste with which Chamberlain had turned down the scheme, did not make things easy, and the meeting was disagreeable and even painful. The exchanges between Gladstone and Chamberlain were marked by extraordinary bitterness, and when the Cabinet broke up Chamberlain

and Trevelyan had resigned. The breach, no doubt, was inevitable sooner or later, but it is difficult to resist the conclusion that incompatibility of temper had as much to do with it at this moment as differences of policy. When the resignations were publicly announced and irrevocable Harcourt wrote to Chamberlain:

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

TREASURY, WHITEHALL, *March* 26.—Though the event of to-day has been long foreseen it is not the less painful to me now it has arrived. I feel myself separated from nearly all the men with whom I have the most personal sympathy. These are the things which make political life intolerable.

The situation is so difficult that I find myself hardly able to form a judgment on my own course—still less on that of others. . . .

Whatever may be the changes and chances of these bad times I hope we shall remain friends. For apart from politics there are few men whose friendship I value more than yours.

Chamberlain replied (March 27) in similar vein. He felt confident that their personal relations would not be altered, though the case of Burke and Fox showed how difficult it was for politicians, driven apart in public life, to maintain private intimacy and regard. As to Home Rule he did not believe that Gladstone had one convinced supporter for his policy as a whole and thought that the policy would have been scouted unanimously by the Liberal Party if it had come from anyone else.

II

The defection of the Radical leader was not the end of the trouble. Chamberlain's departure did not leave the Cabinet an entirely happy family. Harcourt had done his best to keep Chamberlain in the Cabinet, but more than once he was on the point of going himself. He was as resolute for the exclusion of the Irish members as Chamberlain had been against, and when Gladstone showed some disposition to compromise on this subject he threatened to resign. "Your father," said Spencer to Lewis Harcourt, "is very difficult to deal with on this question, for first he refuses to discuss it at all, and then he makes a bother

because he has not been allowed enough time to discuss it." The air was thick with rumours that he had resigned, and in the Cabinet he made it clear that he would resign if the "vital and essential" twenty-fourth clause which provided for the removal of the Irish members was tampered with.

But nothing of these conflicts behind the scenes was reflected in Harcourt's public attitude when the great argument came before Parliament. It was on April 8 that Gladstone, amid circumstances of public emotion unprecedented even in his long career, threw down his gage of battle. Outside the House great multitudes hailed the arrival of the combatants with the cheers and countercheers of conflicting passions, and inside the House, where members had taken their seats at the dawn of day, the scene was one of extraordinary intensity. The greatness of the occasion, the disruption of parties, the emotions that centred in the venerable figure who had taken the field for his last and most daring adventure—all conspired to make the occasion memorable in the annals of Parliament. Gladstone's speech in moving for leave to introduce the Bill was a noble appeal to the better mind of men, simple and weighty, without a provocative note, but directed to attune the thoughts of his hearers to a new theme and to keep them accessible to the arguments of reason and justice. The debate was resumed the next day by Chamberlain, who declared his opposition to the scheme as a whole and to each part of it, but surprised the House by advocating some scheme of federation, and it was continued by Hartington and Mr. John Morley. Harcourt spoke on April 13. His readiness to speak brought a grateful message from Gladstone, who said he had feared that Harcourt with "budget-on-the-brain" would be too much occupied to do so. Harcourt replied:

TREASURY, *April* 11.—Many thanks for your kind letter. I think for all reasons it is right and necessary that I should vindicate my position, which I shall feel the less difficulty in doing after the total failure of Trevelyan, Chamberlain, and Hartington to suggest any alternative. I should like to speak after Randolph Churchill to-

morrow before dinner, and will unless I hear from you to the contrary, so inform the Speaker.

In his speech he at once came to grips with Chamberlain. He quoted from a book entitled *The Radical Programme*, to which Chamberlain had written a preface of general approval, and which declared with unqualified emphasis for Irish self-government. Chamberlain protested that he had only written the preface, but Harcourt, pointing out that the preface commended the contents as "an attempt to compile a definite and practical programme for the Radical Party," proceeded suavely with his deadly quotations, amid the increasing protests of Chamberlain. It was on both sides good-humoured, but it was the beginning of a duel that was only to end with the close of the active career of one of them. For the rest, Harcourt's speech was a powerful statement of the case for a new policy. He based that case on the ground that the Conservative association with the Irish in the previous summer had made Coercion no longer a tenable position until the alternative sanctioned in the Carnarvon negotiations, and blessed in the Newport speech, had been honestly faced. In his opinion the events of last June had entirely changed the whole aspect of the Irish question.

> . . . I was convinced at that time (he continued), I am more convinced now—that those events and the course then taken by the Conservative Party made Home Rule inevitable. . . . I am not stating that the course then taken was a right or a wrong course; all I say is that it has had certain results, and those results cannot be recalled. Now what was the character of that act? It was unquestionably a condemnation of the policy Lord Spencer had pursued. . . . It was not merely that the Crimes Act was allowed to expire, but the whole of the General Election was fought on those lines.

The tone of the speech was not bitter, but it examined the positions of Hartington and Churchill with shrewdness and wit, and disposed of the strange assortment of bedfellows now associated in opposition to the Government by a delightful application of Burke's famous description of Chatham's later administration, the appositeness of which to

the new Unionist combination filled the House with shrieks of laughter as with each thrust he turned now to Chamberlain, now to Hartington, now to Churchill, now to Goschen :

> . . . He made an Administration so checkered and speckled ; he put together a piece of joinery so crossly indented and whimsically dovetailed ; a cabinet so variously inlaid ; such a piece of diversified mosaic ; such a tessellated pavement without cement ; here a bit of black stone and there a bit of white (cheers and ironical cheers and laughter) ; patriots and courtiers, King's friends and Republicans (cheers and ironical cheers and laughter) ; Whigs and Tories, treacherous friends and open enemies (cheers and ironical cheers and laughter) found themselves, they knew not how, pigging together (cheers and ironical cheers and laughter), heads and points in the same truckle-bed. It was indeed a very curious show ; but utterly unsafe to touch and unsure to stand on. (Loud cheers and ironical cheers and laughter.)

Not the least effective passage of this part of the speech was when, having disposed of the alternatives of those who had spoken, he addressed himself to Goschen. "Ah, but we have one hope left," he cried in his deepest tones. And he turned round upon Goschen, who was sitting dejectedly with his face in his hands. "One hope left—can he enlighten us ? I want to know how this skeleton at the feast has settled our bill of fare." The solemnity, the mock pathos of Harcourt's half-whispering, broken tones, and the adroit reference to Chamberlain's recent attacks on Goschen were, says a contemporary description, irresistibly funny, "and off, once more, went the House into a roar of laughter." Then he discussed the alternative Prime Ministers. These were Lord Salisbury, Lord Randolph Churchill, Mr. Chamberlain, Lord Hartington, Sir Henry James, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Trevelyan. They reminded him of a tragedy of antiquity, and might be known as the "Seven against Ireland." He had no faith in the dream of the millennium when the "calf and the young lion and the fatling will lie down together, with a little child (perhaps from Paddington) to lead them." He warned them that if the aristocracy of England were going to range themselves with the party of ascendancy in Ireland, the democracy of England would side with the Irish people. (Home Rule

cheers and cries of "Shame!") They might reject this Bill, but its record would remain and its ghost would haunt their festivals of Coercion.

With this speech, to which Goschen replied with passion and resentment, Harcourt finally burned his boats. That night the first reading was passed, and with the first reading of the Land Purchase Bill on April 16 the way was clear for the real struggle. But while Harcourt had committed himself irrevocably to conciliation, he was still warring in the Cabinet against any whittling-down of the vital twenty-fourth clause providing for exclusion, and two days later—the day that he introduced his Budget—he wrote to Gladstone that he could not be a consenting party to the modification of that provision.

Although the breach with Chamberlain was now a public matter, Harcourt had not surrendered hope that it could be healed. Writing to him two days later, he said :

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

TREASURY, WHITEHALL, *April* 18.—I have been thinking a good deal over our conversation yesterday. I cannot but think that you should leave something to "Time the healer."

I hope you will not think it necessary to "go out of your own parish" or "preach out of your own pulpit" during the recess. You may say all it is necessary to say in your "domestic forum" without carrying the "fiery cross" abroad.

After all, we must think of the future of the Liberal Party after these bad days are overpast, and do what in us lies to prevent its rupture being irreparable, which it may well become. I at least shall act with that view, and I hope you will also. It is quite clear that if you do not want to make this impossible you ought not to lay down an ultimatum presented at the sword's point.

Things may alter a good deal in the course of the next fortnight if they are left alone, and there is no use stirring up the fires of hell with a red-hot poker.

I will write to you to-morrow more at large on special points, but you must see that you cannot settle with the G.O.M. on the terms of an absolute surrender, in which you shall assume the position of saying that from the first you have been all in the right and he all in the wrong. This is not compromise but capitulation.

I am heartily sick of the whole business, but I suppose I shall go on to the end like Falkland crying "Peace, Peace!"—when there is no peace.

The next day (April 19) he wrote again at great length, pointing out to Chamberlain his equivocal position and reminding him that the great bulk of the secessionists would be Hartingtonians, not Chamberlainians. "If you were to succeed in beating the Bill on second reading I can see very well where Salisbury, Hartington, and Goschen would be. They would go in hammer-and-tongs for Coercion. I can see very well where the Gladstonians will be. They can stand aside and say, 'Told you so.' But where will you be? You will have made Coercion necessary. I suppose you will not embrace it. And afterwards?" He realized that Hartington was past praying for, and that the "skeleton" (Goschen) had him fast in his arms. "Why should you sever yourself from what after all must remain the bulk of the Liberal Party, and why should you do anything now which should widen and perpetuate the breach?"

. . . You and I know Gladstone well enough (he continued) to be quite aware that the notion of your dictating to him publicly terms of surrender is quite out of the question. Why not agree to support the second reading, and trust to what you can do in Committee.

I don't think Mr. G. is nearly as hostile to you as you are to him, but after all he is the master of the Party, and must be treated as such. . . . I understand that Edinburgh is to be made the cockpit of the United Kingdom. Hartington and Goschen are going there in couples, and I believe Spencer is going on the Government ticket.

I am going down to the New Forest to hold my tongue. It is the best counsel I can offer to my friends. I hope at all events you won't go on the stump. I don't see what possible good that can do to anybody, and least of all to yourself. There is no wound yet made which cannot be healed, but if you once begin to turn a jagged sword round in the flesh it is a different thing. I may be wrong, and my means of judgment are not very extensive, but my impression is that the tendency of the Party is to rally to Gladstone, and they will do so the more in proportion as he appears to be ill-used.

Chamberlain's reply (April 21) was uncompromising. He would take Harcourt's advice, and not enter on a campaign; but that was all. He expected neither compromise nor concession, and imagined they would fight out the matter to the bitter end and break the Liberal Party in the process. But they would know whose fault it was, if that

was any satisfaction. Nothing would induce him to support the second reading of the Home Rule Bill, without a pledge that the Irishmen would be retained at Westminster. He wished the matter could have been squared, but they would have to take the gloves off very soon. "I am sorry you are so bloodthirsty," replied Harcourt from the New Forest. "I wonder what you will be when you take your gloves off. . . . I have heard nothing, and want to hear nothing, since I left London. The New Forest happily has no politics, and since the days of Rufus has had no agrarian crime." He twitted Chamberlain with the defection of John Morley and Schnadhorst, the organizer of the Caucus. At this time Schnadhorst was himself writing to Harcourt asking if something could not be done to bring back the wanderers. "I believe you are against the retention of the Irish members; so am I; but it is obvious that their retention has become a sort of shibboleth with very many Radicals, and I fear an irreconcilable attitude on this point will cost sufficient votes to defeat the second reading."

As that event drew near the question of exclusion became of dominating importance. Gladstone, always anxious to meet the Chamberlain group on this point, wrote to Harcourt (May 1) urging him to look at the matter "in a wise and kindly spirit." "You and I," he said gently, "are not so far off as I think you suppose. But you ride the higher horse, and I go at an amble." Chamberlain himself, in the fluctuations of his moods, again seemed disposed to bargain. Writing to Harcourt on May 2 he sent a list of 119 Liberals who would vote against the second reading, but added that if the Irish representatives were retained at Westminster he thought fifty-five of these might vote with the Government. Was there any possibility of the withdrawal of the Bill and the substitution of resolutions affirming the principle? Harcourt replying on May 3 made fun of Chamberlain's figures, pointed out that the Liberals in the country were with Gladstone, predicted that the secessionists would go to the wall, and, while agreeing with Chamberlain as to the way the plan had been launched, said "the author of the

'unauthorized programme' ought not to be too severe upon carpenters who improvise 'new planks' on the platform." He saw no basis of agreement in Chamberlain's "five-barrelled ultimatum" to the G.O.M., but still hoped that all would be well, and that before the end of the month they could all "kiss and be friends." Chamberlain, replying on May 5, admitted that it would be madness for the Government to meet his views, and said he did not want a compromise. He would prefer to fight the matter out and abide by the consequences; but he had to make advances to satisfy the anxiety of his friends to keep the party together if possible. After this Harcourt was warranted in telling Gladstone (May 13): "I am sure you will be deceived if you think Chamberlain is to be conciliated on *any terms*. He has no thought but war to the knife."

III

With this correspondence any hope of healing the breach with the Chamberlain faction vanished. In the meantime, the public excitement grew. The feeling in aristocratic circles was extraordinarily bitter, and a system of social proscription new to English affairs was rigorously adopted. It was as though a vast fissure, cutting right across parties, communities, and even families, had suddenly rent the national life in twain. Peers and old colleagues refused even to attend Gladstone's dinner on the Queen's birthday, and Gladstone plaintively confessed that of those who did attend most would have voted for a motion of censure on him at his own table. Salisbury and Hartington appeared at a great meeting at the Opera House in the Haymarket side by side, and Salisbury sounded the battle-cry of the new fusion—"twenty years of resolute government." But if society was passionate against Home Rule, and the leaders were overwhelmingly hostile to it, the rank and file of the Liberal Party were no less emphatically with Gladstone in his heroic enterprise. The National Liberal Federation, which had been in no small measure the creation of Chamberlain, renounced him in favour of his Chief and his Chief's

new policy. It was a bitter blow to a proud man—proud above all of his authority over the great instrument that had so largely contributed to the victory of the preceding December. His heart hardened. When Gladstone summoned the memorable meeting of the Liberal Party at the Foreign Office on May 27, he refused to go. In a letter to Harcourt (May 26) he gave as his reason the wording of the invitation, and referring to the second reading said his opposition to the Bill had been *reduced to the one point of the exclusion of the Irish from Westminster*, but the Government would not yield on that. The good faith of this suggestion may be estimated by the fact that three weeks before, writing to Dilke, he said:

> . . . To satisfy others I have talked about conciliation and have consented to make advances, but on the whole I would rather vote against the Bill than not, and *the retention of the Irish members is only, with me, the flag that covers other objections.*

The italics are mine in both cases. The two statements convey their own conclusion. Harcourt in replying said his absence would be interpreted "as displaying a foregone determination not to be reconciled with Mr. G. on any terms." On the previous day Chamberlain had called on Harcourt, and the Journal records:

> *May* 25.—Chamberlain came to have a talk with W. V. H. in his room at the House of Commons. W. V. H. asked him what he would do if Gladstone invited all those in favour of the principle of Irish autonomy to a meeting of the Party at the Foreign Office on Thursday and announced there that if the second reading was carried he should not proceed with the Bill this Session but bring it in again in the autumn with the objectionable 24th clause considerably modified and altered. Chamberlain would not answer at once, but after a long conversation he said that the concession was not sufficiently definite, and he could not accept it. He protested against the invitation to the meeting of the Party being so worded as to exclude Hartington and his followers, and added that if Hartington did not go he, Chamberlain, would also stay away from the meeting. W.V. H. said, as Chamberlain was leaving the room, "Now, my dear Chamberlain, confess that no concession whatever would satisfy you or moderate your hatred of Mr. G., whom you mean to destroy if you can." Chamberlain would not admit this, but denied it with a bad grace. [H.]

At the meeting at the Foreign Office, Gladstone indicated that he was prepared to compromise on the question of the retention of the Irish members at Westminster. This brought many wanderers back to him, and it seemed that the Bill might be given a second reading and then postponed to the autumn for amendment. But in the House the Opposition made adroit use of this olive branch. If the Bill was to be withdrawn or postponed to give it a second reading would be a farce. Harcourt was still wrestling in private with Chamberlain, who wrote (May 30) in his blandest manner, promising to weigh all that Harcourt had said, declaring that his present attitude was to abstain from voting on the second reading, but pointing out that postponement would only prolong the struggle, and that an early decision from the country was desirable. Harcourt, replying the same day, said :

Harcourt to Chamberlain.

Treasury Chambers, *May* 30.—I am extremely sorry if I used last night any expressions calculated to annoy you or which could tend in any way to obstruct the good understanding which it is my earnest desire to promote. As regards yourself my personal sentiments are entirely unchanged, and are what they always have been, feelings of political respect as well as personal regard. . . .

The situation as I understand it is this. The Government have proposed a scheme for an Irish legislature. So far as the *object* is concerned I conceive you generally concur in it. You object altogether to the *method* in which it is proposed to effect it. Well, the *method* is at an end by the dropping of the Bill. The *object* is affirmed by the second reading. But then you say, " I must have some security that when the *object* is re-introduced in another Bill the *method* to which I object shall not be revived."

Now as to the *method* I have always understood from you that you were ready to support the second reading if the 24th clause were withdrawn *simpliciter*. Your objection to *method* therefore would have been satisfied (if not altogether at least sufficiently for the purpose of second reading) by this concession and its consequential changes. Now the 24th clause is gone with all the other clauses. So far as this part of the Bill goes it is *tabula rasa*. In any future Bill it is to be altered, and altered in *your direction at least*. So far, therefore, your desire is accomplished in great part. . . .

I do not think you can or ought to demand of Mr. G. a declaration that he has thrown over all his own opinions and abandoned

altogether his own plans—especially as he has declared his willingness on the most important point to modify it in your sense. I think such a demand would impose upon him terms unnecessarily humiliating. You must know him well enough to be sure that he will re-introduce his Bill in the shape which he believes will command the most united support from the Liberal Party.

On the other hand it seems to me that your position will be quite clear. You are at liberty to contend that you have achieved your object. You objected to the *plan*. The *plan* will come to an end with the Bill. What the plan will be when re-introduced must and will depend on the opinion which has been created by you and others in the interval. You may reject any new plan then, if you cannot modify it as you think necessary, just as well as you can now.

On the other hand, if you overturn Gladstone now, as you very probably might, what are the results?—irritation, confusion, and recrimination.

The only real alternative policy, because the only real alternative Government, is that of Salisbury. It will be very difficult for you to answer the charge that you have, indirectly at least, contributed to this result. I agree with you that a defection would be disastrous to the Liberal Party, but it rests solely with you to avoid it. And do you not see that the greater the disaster the more will be the blame, which (justly or unjustly) will be cast upon you, who could prevent it and would not? . . .

It was a vain appeal. Harcourt, full of hope that Chamberlain would abstain from voting, wrote off to Gladstone urging that things should be made easy for him. Chamberlain would speak on Monday (May 31), and he (Harcourt) would like to follow him on Tuesday. "It is very desirable that he should be allowed to state his own case in his own way, and that if he chooses to abstain he should be allowed without contradiction to give what reasons he pleases for his course. He enlarged upon this view a good deal to me last night, and expressed a desire not to be brought into apparent personal conflict with you in debate as had happened on former occasions."

But in the meantime Chamberlain, having absented himself from the meeting of the Liberal Party, had summoned a meeting of his own group for the next day, May 31. Down below the second-reading debate, which had begun on May 10, was in progress, but its fate was in the hands of the meeting, and that meeting was in the hands of Chamberlain.

It was common knowledge that if the Chamberlain group abstained the second reading would pass by a small majority; if they voted the second reading would be lost, and the Bill and the Government with it. The decision was to vote, and when next day (June 1) Harcourt intervened in the debate he spoke on a lost cause. He began with an historical survey of the Irish grievance; passed to an examination of Chamberlain's idea of federalism, contending that the Gladstone plan left the Parliament at Westminster more supreme than a federal scheme would do; made effective use of the threat that Ulster would fight, dealt with the question of the protection of minorities, and asked what protection there was for the Catholic minority when the Union took place; and then turned and rent Salisbury's "Hottentot" speech and his recipe of twenty years' resolute government—a sort of twenty years' penal servitude. "Well, this policy had been applied for four times twenty years since the Union, and what good had it done?" His conclusion was prophetic. "You may destroy the Bill for to-day (he said) and you may destroy the Government which sits upon these benches, but you will not destroy the principle upon which the Bill is founded. It will be taken up and it will be pursued, and it will be carried on by the Liberal Party until it is finally accomplished."

No part of the speech was more effective than that in which he dealt with Chamberlain's new federal plan. "As point after point was delivered," said the Unionist *Scotsman* next day, "each one skilfully arranged so as to take Mr. Chamberlain thoroughly in the flank, Mr. Gladstone turned in his place, and by jubilant cheers emphasized the ridicule which was being cast upon the 'brand new plan.'" But the struggle had passed beyond the reach of argument, and moved to the known and inevitable conclusion. It was not even affected by Parnell's disclosure that he had received from a member of the Salisbury Government the expectation of a statutory Parliament with power to protect Irish industries. The debate, memorable in the annals of Parliament for the high plane on which it moved, culminated

on June 7 in a speech of moving eloquence from Gladstone marked by one passage of devastating scorn in which, replying to Chamberlain's remark that a dissolution had no terrors for him, he unmasked with deadly effect the ingenuity with which he had set his sails for any wind that blew.

Midnight had passed when Gladstone sat down, and at one o'clock on the morning of June 8 the division was taken. When the numbers were announced the Government were found to be in a minority of thirty, no fewer than ninety-three Liberals having voted against the second reading. It was a greater defeat than had been anticipated, and the triumph of Chamberlain was complete. A heavy price was paid for it, and thirty-five years later his son, engaged in carrying through a measure vastly in excess of that of 1886, stood up on a public platform and delivered a courageous defence of the reversal of the policy that his father had pursued with such fatal consequences to the peace and prosperity of the Realm.

IV

Two courses were before the Government—to resign or to remain in office pending the appeal to the country. The latter was adopted. The remaining sittings of the House were devoted to the winding up of business, but one speech made by Harcourt at the time is of interest as showing that the principle of local option to which he had long been moving had now been finally adopted by him. He advanced it as a ground for voting against Sunday closing, which should be a matter of local option rather than national decision.

The session was brought to a close on June 25, and on the following day Parliament, the shortest in Victorian records, was dissolved. Gladstone had issued his election manifesto ten days earlier, stating the choice to be between his own plan and that of Salisbury for twenty years' coercion. With the deepening and widening of the cleavage between parties, the personal relations of the chief combatants became strained and embittered. A violent speech by Bright led

to a painful correspondence between Gladstone and his old colleague. Harcourt had his share of these unhappy severances. The most bitter incident was his breach with Hartington who told him that he proposed to go to Derby to speak against him. "I was hardly able to realize the thing at the moment," wrote Harcourt (June 27) to Hartington:

> . . . On reflection (he continued) I feel bound to say before it is too late what a bitter thing it would be to me to find myself placed in personal hostility to you after the long and close relations in which we have stood.
>
> I judge the case by the impossibility I should have felt myself in taking any action individually against yourself, but I do not of course consider that you are at all bound by the same considerations.
>
> If there is to be war between us it will be to me the saddest thing which has befallen me in public life, but I shall have the satisfaction of feeling it was not of my seeking, and that I have done all in my power to avert it.

Hartington replied that it was difficult to draw the line where the war was to stop; but on reflection he had decided on the course which was most pleasant to himself. Harcourt thanked him, and urging the importance of not widening the breach by "individual conflict with our former colleagues," said he had received an amiable letter from Chamberlain, who said the issue of the election was a "dark horse," and that "the arm-chair politicians" would settle things this time.

Harcourt with his colleague, Sir Thomas Roe, issued his address to the electors of Derby on June 24. The most memorable passage in it—a passage to which time and events have given a lasting significance—was that in which, having shown by reference to the history of great arguments that parliamentary manœuvres may overthrow administrations, but have no power to defeat great policies, he said:

> . . . In the midst of all this eager controversy, we believe no reasonable man really doubts that in the end Home Rule must and will be conceded to the Irish people. The question of to-day is, whether it shall be granted generously and spontaneously, when it will be regarded with gratitude and satisfaction, or whether it is to be reluctantly extorted after protracted and mischievous agitation.

It was with a very depleted general staff that Gladstone

took the field. The great domestic foes of the previous election, Hartington and Chamberlain, were now reconciled in a common antagonism to their late leader. With them were many of the ablest and most experienced of the Liberal lieutenants, men like Goschen, James and Trevelyan, Whigs and Radicals alike. The situation had left Harcourt in the position of Gladstone's unchallenged chief of staff. With the disappearance of Chamberlain there was no competition, for the distinguished gifts of Mr. John Morley were not of a parliamentary kind, and it is a sufficient answer to the taunts which were sometimes flung at Harcourt on the ground of his supposed ambition that, before the split, his one anxiety, to which he had devoted every resource of persuasion and argument at his command, had been to keep his most dangerous rival to the succession within the ranks of the Liberal Party. It will be seen that those efforts did not cease even with what seemed the final breach caused by the election. In the circumstances, next to Gladstone himself, the heaviest burden of the election fell upon Harcourt's shoulders. He had first to make his own return secure, and he opened his campaign at Derby on June 24 in a speech in which he paid generous tributes to the motives of the old colleagues from whom he was now separated. When Chamberlain's name was received with groans, he insisted that he was a man "incapable of being actuated by base or personal motives." But his desire to keep the atmosphere cool and to maintain personal contact in being, did not prevent him dealing faithfully with his old friends and especially Chamberlain who, like himself, had entered the Government knowing that a new policy was contemplated and had gone out, not because he disagreed with the principle but because he disagreed with the method:

> . . . Well, gentlemen (he said), to tell you the truth I did not think it right to break up a Party or destroy a Government with which I was in accord in principle on account of a difference in method. And if it came to a question of method, why for my part I am not ashamed to confess that I thought and still think that Mr. Gladstone in his great age and long experience and his ripe wisdom is quite probably as good a judge of method as anyone else.

In this, as in subsequent speeches, he went over the grounds that had satisfied him that coercion as a permanent means of governing Ireland was no longer possible, and, as one who had with Lord Spencer tried that policy and found it wanting, he insisted that reconciliation with the Irish people could alone remove this ancient quarrel. Having secured his return at Derby he went to the support of H. H. Fowler and Sir William Plowden at Wolverhampton. By this time it was apparent that the tide was flowing with formidable impetus against the Government. The verdict of the boroughs was decisive, and although there were beams in the darkness—Goschen, for example, being beaten at East Edinburgh and Sir George Trevelyan in the Border Boroughs—it was with the knowledge that the battle was lost that Harcourt set out to check the tide in the counties. Dorsetshire was the scene of his crusade, and in the next few days he delivered a series of speeches at Poole, Sherborne and Bridport. A passage from his speech at Sherborne will illustrate the way in which his argument was developing, and has a special interest in the light of after events :

. . . During a great part, and the most prosperous part, of the reign of George III (he said) there was an independent Parliament in Ireland. Did it destroy the supremacy of the Crown or the unity of the Empire ? (Laughter and No). No man ever thought of talking such nonsense in those days. There was once a great member of the Dominions which we lost, and we did then destroy the supremacy of the Crown and the unity of the Empire. . . . Canada and Australia are self-governing peoples with Parliaments of their own, and when we are in trouble and want aid we may look to their loyalty, their generosity and their affection for the mother country. Could we have asked Ireland to send us troops to help in Egypt ? (No.) Why, we now keep 30,000 troops in Ireland in order to keep down the people. (Shame.) We are warned against Home Rule because people say it will be so expensive, and we shall have further taxes put on our tobacco and our beer. (A voice, " We hope not.") But have they any idea of the price we are now paying for an army of occupation of 30,000 men ? In order to maintain the union in Ireland we are obliged to keep there in arms more British troops than fought at Waterloo, more than we sent against the Russians in the Crimea, and all because we are determined to govern by force a people whom we will not govern by their goodwill, and therefore, when we are told that Home Rule

will be expensive, I ask you to consider the millions of money we are now spending in order to maintain that union which has disunited the nation. (Cheers.)

Harcourt mingled his strenuous campaigning with a pleasant diversion. Lord Wolverton had his yacht *Palatine* on the Dorset coast, and Harcourt joined him in the intervals of his task. Writing to Lady Harcourt from the yacht (July 11), he said:

. . . We made a nice visit down to Studland Bay just opposite Bournemouth, five miles from Poole. We made the *trajet* on the steam launch in the evening and had a fair meeting. We learn then the news of the crushing majority against Batten, which is of evil omen for the rest of Dorset. Everything is as bad as bad can be, though the defeat of Trevelyan is some consolation. Our plans are as follows: We go back to Weymouth to-night. I shall go by train to Sherborne and return late that night to the yacht. We shall sail about midnight Monday straight for St. Malo and spend possibly two or three days on French coast. I have a letter from the G.O.M. in which he says there will be no Cabinet before *Monday* week, i.e. 19th, so there is no use any of us returning to London till the end of this week. G.O.M. is evidently inclined to resignation without meeting Parliament, but not strong on the point and open to conviction. However I am beginning to change my own view, as the defeat is so enormous. I expect the Tories will get an absolute majority of their own, leaving the Union Liberals out of the account. It is indeed a smash the like of which has not been known. But in these days things come round quick, and I am by no means despairing. . . .

When a few days later Harcourt returned from his brief yachting cruise the election was practically over, the complete figures being:

Conservatives	316
Liberal Unionists	78
Gladstonians	191
Parnellites	85

Gladstone had been doubtful whether he should resign or not. Harcourt was at first emphatic against resignation without a parliamentary vote. "I think it of the greatest consequence," he wrote to Gladstone (July 7), when the dimensions of the inevitable defeat were doubtful, "that the seceders should be compelled to *vote you out*, and *that*

you should not resign without it." Gladstone replied that he had an open mind on the subject, but he did not understand Harcourt's desire to force the seceders to put them out. " You may think, as I do, that the majority of them would not do it on a direct vote of censure, but would do it on an Irish amendment. Is it for the interest of the country or of the party that the new Parliament should begin by solemnly committing itself against Home Rule ? " Strong representations against resignation were made to Harcourt by Labouchere, Wilfrid Lawson and other of the more combative spirits, but when the magnitude of the defeat became apparent Harcourt saw that there was only one fitting course to pursue. By this time Gladstone had come definitely to the same conclusion, and on July 20 the Cabinet met for the last time, and the next day the resignation of the Government was formally tendered to the Queen.

Appendix I

(THE QUEEN'S SPEECH OF 1881)

Minute to Mr. Gladstone.

Secretary of State,
Home Department.

This is the paper sent by the Queen to Lord Spencer and myself at Osborne before the Council as a *condition precedent* to her approval of the Speech. We replied that we did not feel authorized to advise a partial or conditional approval of the Speech as settled by the Cabinet, and the Speech was assented to without reservation of any kind. Of course what may be done subsequently stands on a different footing. This paper of our objection was withdrawn at Osborne before the Council.

(Sgd.) W. V. H.

January 7, '81.

Telegram.

Osborne,
January 5, 1881.

Lord Spencer and Sir W. Harcourt to Mr. Gladstone.

On arrival here we find the Queen objects to the paragraph in the Speech announcing the intention to evacuate Candahar. She desires that nothing definite should be said on the point one way or the other. We have replied that this is a question of policy which the Cabinet has decided and that we cannot take the responsibility of agreeing to the omission of the paragraph. So the matter stands at this moment. The Queen declines to agree to the Speech as it stands. We have declared our inability without authority from you and the Cabinet to assent to its alteration. The Queen has proposed to us that she should approve of the Speech keeping this point in abeyance to be settled between Her Majesty and yourself by telegraph, but we have answered that we do not feel justified in advising Her Majesty to take that course. Please let us know your views at once.

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. GLADSTONE BY EARL SPENCER AND SIR W. HARCOURT AS TO WHAT PASSED AT OSBORNE ON JANUARY 5, 1881, RELATIVE TO THE APPROVAL BY THE QUEEN OF THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE.

We arrived at Osborne at about one o'clock on January 5. It had been intended that the Council should be held and the Speech approved immediately. But we were informed by Sir H. Ponsonby that the Queen strongly disapproved the paragraph in the Speech relating to the evacuation of Candahar, which she desired to have altered or omitted before the Speech was approved, and that H.M. had telegraphed to Mr. Gladstone to that effect at 10 a.m., to which message at that time no answer had been received. Several verbal communications between the Queen and ourselves passed in the interval from 1 to 2 p.m., H.M. urging that we should assent to the approval of the Speech either altered or keeping in abeyance the paragraph in question for further consideration. We pointed out that this question was one of high policy; that it had been settled by the Cabinet after much deliberation, and that we had no authority to assent to its alteration or omission; that no time remained for a further reference to the Cabinet. We impressed upon Sir H. Ponsonby that the Speech from the Throne was in no sense an expression of H.M.'s individual sentiments but a declaration of policy made on the responsibility of Her Ministers. At length about two o'clock, the matter being still urged upon us, and Mr. Gladstone's reply to the Queen's telegram not having yet arrived, Lord Spencer sent to the Queen a note to the following effect:

> It is impossible for the Ministers in attendance to advise Her Majesty to approve in Council a speech a portion of which H.M. at the same time expressly disapproves. H.M. Government cannot deliver in H.M. name a speech which H.M. does not approve in the whole.

We then telegraphed to Mr. Gladstone an account of what we had done and asking for his views on the situation. To this telegram we received no reply before we left Osborne. Lord Spencer's letter being apparently deemed unsatisfactory by H.M., whilst we were at luncheon Sir W. Harcourt was called out and shown by Sir H. Ponsonby a Memorandum which Sir H. P. thought would be considered satisfactory by the Queen. As nothing ultimately resulted from this paper we have no copy of it. It was in the handwriting of Sir H. P., and was regarded as his suggestion and not as emanating from us. The general

purport was that the Queen would approve the Speech on the condition that the Ministers in attendance should "express to the Cabinet her *earnest hope* that if the retention of Candahar should hereafter appear to be *necessary* Her Government would not hesitate to retain that important post." Sir W. Harcourt pointed out the objections to making the approval of the Speech in any way conditional, but said that H.M. Ministers in attendance would feel it their duty to convey to the Cabinet the wish thus expressed by the Queen. Sir H. Ponsonby upon showing his Memorandum to the Queen, altered it in this sense.

We received no further communication from H.M. till about 3.30 p.m. about which time Mr. Gladstone's cypher telegram (despatched at 1.30 p.m.) in reply to the Queen's message (sent at 10 a.m.) at length arrived. That telegram entirely confirmed the view which we had sustained that the Candahar paragraph in the Speech could not be altered or omitted. We have since understood that Mr. Gladstone's answer was sent after consultation with Lord Granville and Lord Hartington. Almost contemporaneously with the receipt of Mr. Gladstone's telegram, a Memorandum in the handwriting of the Queen, written before receipt of Mr. Gladstone's reply, was given to us by Sir H. Ponsonby. For reasons which will presently be stated the Memorandum was ultimately withheld, and we therefore retain no copy of it, as we understood from Sir H. Ponsonby before we entered the Queen's presence that it was to be regarded as far as we were concerned, as *non avenu*.

This paper was to the effect that H.M. was prepared *generally* to approve of the Speech, but that she *strongly disapproved* the paragraph relating to Candahar, and that she could only assent to the Speech in this general way of a material part of it and accompanied by a requisition of assurances from us which we did not feel authorized to give that we thought it right to prepare a written reply to the following effect, which we requested Sir H. Ponsonby to read to the Queen.

[Here the writers refer to a previous communication.]

In the interval between the communication to us of the Queen's written Memorandum and our reply to it, i.e. between 3.30 and 4 p.m., H.M. had probably considered Mr. Gladstone's answer to H.M.'s telegram of the morning. Sir H. Ponsonby after carrying to the Queen our reply to H.M.'s Memorandum returned almost immediately (about 4 p.m.) informing us that before he had concluded reading to the Queen our reply H.M. instructed him to tell us that the Queen, though highly displeased at the

non-compliance with her desire to have the Speech altered, would hold the Council at once. Sir H. Ponsonby told Sir W. H. that the Ministers in attendance were discharged of all responsibility in the transaction, and that the Speech would be simply approved. H.M. would communicate with Mr. Gladstone at once through Sir H. Ponsonby. Thereupon Sir H. Ponsonby took back H.M.'s Memorandum, which was regarded as now withheld and returned to us our reply to it. We then about 4 p.m. entered the Council Room when the ordinary business of the Council was first transacted and subsequently in the presence of H.R.H. Prince Leopold, the Lord President, the Lord Steward and the Home Secretary, the Queen signified her assent to the Speech in the usual manner without any reservations, and we at once left Osborne and returned to London, having telegraphed the Queen's assent to Mr. Gladstone before our departure from Osborne. We had no personal conversation with the Queen during our stay at Osborne, the whole discussion being conducted through the medium of Sir H. Ponsonby. The position we assumed from the first and which we maintained throughout was that we had no authority either to agree to the alteration of a material part of the Speech which had been settled by the Cabinet, or to assent to a partial and limited approbation of the Speech, or to become ourselves parties to conditions as to the declarations contained in the Speech, by which the Queen might consider the Cabinet to be hereafter bound and which would have altered and controlled the real effect of the announcement made in the Queen's name to Parliament and the country. The public, who would have had no cognizance of these undisclosed conditions upon which the assent of the Queen had been obtained, would have accepted the declaration of the Speech in its obvious sense. Such a course, it appeared to us, would neither have been candid on our part towards Parliament nor in conformity with constitutional practice, and its danger seemed to us so grave that we were very careful throughout the whole transaction to guard against any departure from the regular proceeding of a simple and unreserved approval by the Queen of the Speech to be delivered from the Throne in Her name.

Appendix II

MEMORANDUM ON EGYPT, 1884

When this Government first entered on the occupation of Egypt it was not with the view of a permanent tenure or even a protracted administration of that country. We definitely and emphatically disclaimed any such object in the face of Parliament and of Europe. If we depart from that position we may explain our conduct to this country (though that will be difficult), but how are we to escape the solemn pledges which we gave to Europe and in virtue of which we received if not their mandates at least their acquiescence in our temporary occupation of Egypt.

The theory on which we originally undertook the management of Egypt was that after the overthrow of Arabi we should be able to set Egypt on its own legs within a comparatively brief period and, having constructed an adequate native Government, leave the country to administer itself. We certainly never contemplated undertaking pecuniary liabilities or guaranteeing loans.

This theory, however plausible it may have been, has completely broken down. It is not necessary to refer to the circumstances which have conduced to this result—the disaster of the Sudan, the Alexandria indemnities, etc., etc. The fact remains that Egypt is insolvent, she cannot pay the public creditor and, at the same time, make the necessary provision for her Civil and Military administration. And, what is worst of all, it must now be admitted that she does not contain the elements out of which Civil Government or Military organization can be constructed.

If, then, we are to remain in Egypt we must contribute to her finance, we must find her troops, we must man her Civil Service. In short, the administration of Egypt must be in substance an English Administration, maintained in part at the cost of the English taxpayer. There is no longer any probability that if we enter on this task we can escape from it in any calculable period.

Our presence will be as indispensable in the future as to-day. We cannot, therefore, shirk the question, *Are we to undertake administration of Egypt for an indefinite period?*

Indeed, Northbrook's proposal to guarantee a loan practically

involves this, for we should certainly not undertake such an obligation except in view of a protracted, if not a permanent, occupation. Indeed, our continued occupation is the only security for the guarantee.

Before, however, we answer the question, *Shall we undertake this task?* there is a previous question, viz. *Can we undertake this task?* Upon this arise two distinct and capital questions.

(1) *Will the Powers of Europe assent to our protracted and exclusive occupation of Egypt?*

I notice here only to dismiss the supposition that they will tolerate our administration of Egypt except upon the terms of our providing for the payment of the debt in full. If we do not find the funds necessary for this purpose, they will, I think, certainly demand our evacuation of Egypt, as they have clearly a right to do. We stand between them and the remedies which, but for our presence, they would have against their debtor. They have a right to say "If you cannot administer Egypt so as to secure our debts, we can and we will."

An attempt, therefore, on the part of England to sustain Egypt in a policy of repudiation would, I think, certainly bring us face to face with a European quarrel and possibly, if we persisted, an European war. It is difficult enough for us to administer with the tacit assent of Europe, but against the will of Europe it is impossible. We have neither the moral right nor the physical force requisite for such a policy.

I do not think that, even if we were to undertake to see the interest on the debt paid, it is by any means certain that in the present tempers of France and Germany they will give their consent to our continued exclusive occupation of Egypt. It seems to me more than likely that they will demand some other arrangement of their own which will be different from a purely English occupation. If they do, on what ground can we resist? Can we insist by force on our exclusive possession? To wait till they demand our retirement is to expose ourselves to unnecessary humiliation.

The first great objection then to entering upon a system which involves the protracted occupation of Egypt, is that we may have to do it in the teeth of Europe, and that is a terrible risk which we are not justified in incurring. Indeed, there is no possible English interest commensurate with such a risk.

(2) But assuming this great obstacle out of the way, and that we have the consent of Europe to our prolonged occupation, the next question is, *Can we administer Egypt?*

As I have indicated above, if we do so it must be by a substantially English administration. The idea with which we started and which led to the Hicks disaster and the difficulty of the Sudan, viz. that we could treat Egyptian administration in any department as something independent of ourselves and for which we were not responsible is finally exploded. We shall have to find all the principal Civil, Military and Police organization. It will be as much, even more, an English administration than that of any state in India. But in India we are remote from foreign influence and to a great degree free from Parliamentary interference. We do pretty much what we like. But Egypt is practically a European province. It is within the range of newspaper correspondence, of parliamentary criticism, of continental influence. Every act of an administration there is canvassed, challenged and censured at home and abroad, and that in a condition of things where the administration must come into collision with any sort of English prejudice on questions of police and slavery, etc., and with every phase of continental interests, stock jobbing and others. In India no foreign Power has any right to interfere or remonstrate, to intervene or question our conduct. In Egypt all the great Powers have equal rights with ourselves. Through their financial claims, their Consular Courts, their international Tribunals, there is not an act of our Government which they cannot, if they please, thwart or embarrass. Egypt has long been the focus of European intrigue and will be more than ever so under an English administration. Russia, France, Germany would be for ever tripping up our heels. We should always be in hot water with the Powers. We should have all the evils of becoming a Continental State. We should be for ever in quarrels, perhaps on the verge of war. And all for what? Added to that, the Administration of Egypt will always afford to the Opposition in Parliament, as it now does, a constant and convenient weapon with which to harass a Government. Half the time of Parliament will be taken up with Egyptian discussions.

In my judgment, therefore, to carry on the administration of Egypt under such conditions, both of European and parliamentary obstruction, is an impossibility. It could only end in confusion and disaster, even if we had a department to administer it—which we have not—and to conduct such a business as an occasional piece of job work in the Foreign Office is absurd.

I conclude, therefore, that the task of the continued and

protracted administration of Egypt by England is a practical impossibility.

(1) Because the European Powers are very likely to veto it, and we cannot undertake it against their will.

(2) Because, if they did assent, it is a task which we could not perform under the conditions in which we should have to work.

But if we are not to remain as the permanent (I use the word permanent as meaning a period indefinitely prolonged) administrator of Egypt, on what ground can we ask the taxpayers to make sacrifices by guaranteeing loans or otherwise? If we do not remain there, who is to secure us against liability on our guarantee? And if we do not remain, what equivalent is there for the sacrifice?

The position we took up before the Conference was that Egypt was unable to pay her debts and at the same time provide for her administration, and that England would not consent to accept any burthen except upon condition of a sacrifice to some extent by the creditors. We made that declaration with the approval of Parliament and we broke up the Conference on that express ground. What has happened since to alter that position? I understand Northbrook's investigation to leave that position unchanged. If Egypt pays her debt in full, she cannot provide for the cost of her administration, and, therefore, England must meet to some extent the cost or that administration must collapse. That is the very thing we said we would not do, and which Parliament will not do.

It will be asked, *What then is to be done?*

I will first state *what I think cannot be done.*

(1) We cannot stay in Egypt to sustain the Egyptian Government in diverting money from the *Caisse* in an illegal manner, without incurring the risk of a general quarrel with Europe in which we should be hopelessly in the wrong. How can we maintain that the European bondholder is not to be paid in full when Northbrook (whose Report will be published) avows that he can and ought to be paid in full? I have always thought such an attitude for us untenable, but Northbrook's Report has put it for ever out of the question.

(2) We cannot enter into a policy of guaranteeing loans which involves a prolonged occupation and administration of Egypt.

(*a*) Because it is by no means certain that the European Powers will allow us to do so.

(*b*) Because, for the reason given above, the task of Egyptian administration is not practicable, and offers no advantage corresponding to the risk and cost which it involves. Then what are we to do. I answer, *Retire from Egypt, quam celerrime.*

That is the policy we have always declared and to which we are pledged. But it will be asked, *when and how soon.* I admit that our present engagements for the relief of Gordon and the general situation make our *instant withdrawal* impossible. We must perforce wait till we have got Gordon out and we cannot let the whole fabric of Egyptian administration tumble to pieces at once.

But I am of opinion that *we should now communicate to the European Powers and to Parliament that on a view of the whole situation, and especially of the financial condition of Egypt, we cannot undertake on the part of England the continued administration of Egypt or ask the English people to accept the sacrifices which it involves. That, therefore, we purpose to withdraw—say within a twelvemonth—That during that period the debt will be paid and the administration of Egypt provided for, but after that time the Powers of Europe must provide for the future Government of Egypt, as it is a task which England is not prepared to undertake alone.*

This is a statement with which the Powers of Europe could not quarrel.

Retiring thus by our own will and of our own motion, seems to me the only method by which we can escape the unpleasant alternative, and not improbable contingency, of being compelled to retire after we have announced our intention to stay.

I ought to say a word on the probable Parliamentary position into which these several alternatives may lead us.

If we propose the guarantee suggested by Northbrook, I take it to be certain that it will be condemned by the Opposition as imposing a liability on England without securing any equivalent advantage and that the Government will be defeated by a combination of the Tories, Irish and Radicals. But that is not the worst of the thing. This proposal will leave us pledged as a Party to the policy of a prolonged occupation of Egypt. And the fact of our having proposed it will greatly strengthen the hands of a Tory Government in a policy of annexation or Protectorate, to which I fundamentally object.

On the other hand, if we are beaten (as is quite probable) on the policy of evacuation, we retire on our own base, i.e. on our own principles, viz. the non-annexation of Egypt, and upon that policy we shall be in the future free to act when the opposite policy has got the country into difficulty and danger.

If, as is possible and even probable, we shall be beaten on either alternative, it is far better to be beaten on a policy consonant to our other principles and those of our Party.

In considering matters of this supreme moment, it is well to consider what is *the worst which can happen in either event.*

If we persist in remaining in Egypt, the worst that can happen is that Europe will give us notice to quit and we must either comply with disgrace or resist at the risk of war. This I think very likely to happen.

If we evacuate Egypt, the worst that can happen is that France will go in alone.

This though possible is not, I think, probable, because I do not believe that Russia, Italy or Germany would allow it.

But be that so or not, the first evil, viz. a quarrel with Europe about Egypt, is by far the worst, and is a risk to which nothing would justify our exposing the country. The Government which involved England single-handed in a European War in order to maintain the occupation of Egypt would be accursed to all time.

(*Sd.*) W. V. H.
November 16, '84.

Appendix III

LETTER FROM HARCOURT TO A CORRESPONDENT ON ITINERANT SHOWS

HOME OFFICE,
March 22, 1884.

I am obliged by your letter.

What I said to the deputation requesting me to put down itinerant shows, though spoken on the spur of the moment, expresses a very strong conviction in my mind.

We are doing what we can for the improvement of the houses and homes of the poor for their health and their education. We have already done a good deal in securing for them greater abundance of cheap food and other things which are the necessaries of existence. All this is good in itself, but it is by no means the whole or even the best part of life.

What is to be desired is not only that people should live, but that they should enjoy life, and by enjoyment of life I do not mean mere physical comfort. No doubt it is more difficult though it is by no means impossible to be cheery when you are uncomfortable. But people who have every comfort in life are often the most dull and discontented.

A small minority of the world perhaps devote themselves too much to pleasure, but the greater part of mankind—at least of English kind—have far too little pleasure in life. A good many people deliberately choose to be dull. They seem to think that there is something respectable and even virtuous in a decorous solemnity of existence. To my mind there is nothing so doleful as the class of people who seem to consider that the whole duty of man is summed up in going about in a tall hat and a black coat with an establishment to match. There is nothing so ineffably depressing as the joyless monotony of the well-to-do classes. I don't believe they are a bit better for it, and I am sure they are a good deal less happy than they might be. But that is their affair, and in a free country people must be allowed to be as dreary and morose as they please. But don't let us inflict our dreariness as if it were a good thing on others who are willing to be merry and have too little opportunity of being so.

After all joy is the greatest of all blessings and we should welcome it, however it comes. The great mass of the people of this country have far too little amusement, not because they don't want it but because they can't get it. We cannot organize fun as we do education and drainage—I wish we could; but all attempts at regulating jollity are a mistake and a failure. The merit of the "itinerant showman" is that it is *his* interest to find out and to know what his public patrons want, and to cater for them in the way that pleases them most and which they can afford. I like their "shows." I think I have seen as many of them as most people myself and helped a good many to see them. The "patter" of the showman is one of the most interesting and delightful specimens of indigenous wit and vernacular eloquence which remains to us—far more interesting and quite as instructive as a good many of the solemn performances to which it is my fate to listen. I enjoy the humours and bustle of a fair with its merry-go-rounds and its cock-shies, its fortune-tellers, cheap jacks, Merry Andrews, its acrobats, its theatres, and the shouts of the children, more musical than any concert. I used to like it principally for my own sake—now I like it more for the sake of others.

The best social reformer is the man who realizes most the best thing you can do for people is to make them *jolly*. This spirit of delight is like the sun which illuminates the picture and glorifies the landscape. Let us have all we can of it and especially let us get it for the young whom nature intended to be gay. As years advance we can only hope to see it reflected from the hearts of others. In London how difficult is this to procure. In this wilderness of counting-houses and shops and comfortable dwellings and dilapidated lodgings there is room, it is true, for theatres and concert rooms ever multiplying for the rich, but where are the playing-fields of the poor? I rejoice when I see an accidental space occupied by the yellow caravan or the booth of the showman which offers a precarious entertainment to those who find too little joy between the gutter and the grave.

I certainly by no act of mine will snatch away their lucky windfalls of fun. I should as soon think of putting down Punch at the corner of the streets. I hope that we shall not turn up our respectable noses at the rude and simple pleasures of the poor, and even if we do not understand them ourselves or even suffer some small inconvenience from them, be glad that they give a momentary mirth to those whose lives are sadder than our own.

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RECORD OFFICE
WITHDRAWN
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